

**Planning for Muslim worship places in Athens and lesson drawing from London :
“Why do I have to pray in a basement? [...]This creates distance.”**



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“From a certain point onward there is no longer any turning back. That is the point that must be reached.”

Franz Kafka, The Trial

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Abstract

The speedy growth of Athens Muslim population over the last decade has posed a difficult task to the state in regard with the fulfillment of the needs of this religious group for official places of worship. Different governments through the country's history saw the establishment of official worship places as a “problem” and they failed to recognize that the capital of the country has become a de facto multi-faith city. The discourse about the national identity and the unbreakable bond between the state and the Orthodox Church did not help in forming planning policies that would help to tackle the issue.

On the contrary, other European countries have included policies about the places of worship in regard with social cohesion in their agenda. In particular, United Kingdom as a country that has a bigger tradition in multi-faith communities recognises the importance of worship places and their impact on social cohesion. This is presented in frameworks and guidelines such as the London Plan and the Supplementary Guidance for Planning for the capital of the country. The UK administrative authorities acknowledge that multi-faith communities should be recognized in policies that aim to promote social cohesion. By examining these policies in London and their results in accordance with the lesson drawing theory, this research seeks to find if there are lessons that could be used in Athens context.

Introduction

The objective of this research is to examine what role planning can play to the integration of the Muslim minority in Athens in regard with official worship places and how can Athens draw lessons from London. In order to do so, I examine how planning practice occurs in the Greek context and its implications and how planning strategies or policies for worship places operate in the United Kingdom and especially in London as a European city that has bigger tradition in planning for places for different faith groups. Finally I examine how lesson drawing from London

can help in Athens context.

The research design is presented at this chapter. This includes the research background, the problem statement, the research objective and questions, the methodology and the outline of the chapters. The context of the problem and its relevance is presented in the background sub-chapter. The main issue of the research and its importance is presented in the sub-chapter of the problem statement. The research objective and the specific research questions are displayed in the next sub-chapter in order to give the starting point of the research. The methodology allocates the general guidelines for conducting the research. In closing, the outline gives the structure of this research.

Background

Muslims are almost 3 per cent of the population in the major countries of the European Union and the largest religious minority in Europe. In terms of actual numbers, the countries with a number between 4 and 7 per cent of Muslims are: France, Germany, United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Greece (Cesari, 2005). While the first four have a long tradition in accepting immigrant workers since the 1960's and thus have developed policies about the integration of different religious groups into the wider society, Greece is still struggling to cope with the arrival of a great number of both documented and undocumented immigrants from African and Asian countries. The rapid growth of the population which arrives almost in daily basis in Greece formulates conditions of weak political rights, social exclusion and in some cases racist reactions. One of the standing demands of this “new” population is the facilitation of their religion practices by constructing proper worship places.

Even though other European countries have been dealing with the request for the construction of mosques for decades, we must not forget that this is a relatively new phenomenon in the European context where other established religions such as Christianity have operated for

centuries (Cesari, 2005). However, depending on the institutional and cultural context of each country, there are big differences in the policy making about the construction and the planning of worship places. United Kingdom is considered to be a country that combines the decentralization of the political power with more sensitive politics in regard with cultural differences (Cesari, 2005).

On the other hand, Greece represents a total different situation. By being a country that faced big immigrant waves almost 30 years later than other Western European countries, it is understandable why its' policies in regard with the integration of these immigrants are in fact making their first steps. Greece went quickly from being a labor exporting to a labor importing country without being able to formulate integration policies. Especially in the last 10 years and after the Dublin II Regulation, people who arrive in Greece ,whether “legal” or undocumented, face conditions of weak individual rights and social exclusion (Antonioni, 2003).

However, Muslims in Athens, the capital of the country, are not only people who still struggle for the acquisition of the Greek citizenship but also Greek citizens that face discriminations in regard with the existence of worship places. While all orthodox churches are considered a “natural” element of the landscape and religious symbols such as crosses and icons in public buildings are almost never questioned, hundreds of informal worship places for Muslims operate in the city in a status of semi-legality. In the light of the rise of far right political parties like Golden Dawn and the general polarized situation due to the fact that the country is already in the fourth year of economic depression, these places become targets of racist attacks and extreme violent acts (U.S. Department of State, 2013).

In Greece there is an ongoing discussion about the establishment of official worship places as the first step of integrating the Muslim minority in the wider society. Nevertheless, this discussion is made in terms of ad hoc programs or laws which try to tackle the problem. The weakness of the planning system is present in the specific efforts that the government made for the establishment for a Central Mosque in Athens and the planning decisions thus far

demonstrate the insufficiency of these planning efforts for worship places provision. Moreover, the case study illustrates the problematic of planning for religious places without the engagement of representatives of the particular religious group. The debate about the construction of places of worship for the Muslim minority is linked directly with the uniqueness of the country's cultural context. Greece is the only European Country that the state is not separated from the “prevailing” religion ,the Greek Orthodox Christianity. As the Greek Orthodox Church enjoys a powerful position in the state (Tsitsikelis, 2004), orthodox religious architecture and symbols are highly visible in urban space and they are almost never questioned.

Furthermore, historically, Greek national identity has been constructed as an antithesis to the Muslim “Other” while all the Muslim population in the country have been mistakenly related to Turks (Hatziprokopiou and Evergeti, 2014) since Greece was under the occupation of the Ottoman empire for almost four centuries. Thus, symbols of the Islam in the public sphere like mosques are sometimes considered to be a reminder of these 400 years of oppression. In this context, the Greek state has faced difficulties in implementing plans for worship places for the Muslim community and especially in the capital of the country, this fact has started to create additional problems to the everyday life of Muslims.

The central government is responsible for setting the strategic policy framework for the development for the city of Athens in the next ten years. The administering authority is the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change which, in 2011, launched the Strategic Plan for Athens 2021. One of the key issues in this strategic plan is social cohesion, as “the prime challenge in times of transition and crisis” (Strategic Plan for Athens 2021). Nevertheless, as it is analysed in the relevant chapter of the thesis, in this plan there is not a typology that allows worship places to be distinguish from other social infrastructure such as libraries or sport facilities. Even though the state seems to recognise, at last, the importance of long-term

policies by issuing a strategic framework for the development of Athens for the next ten years, at the same time it does not provide specific guidance and policies on how to include different faith groups in decision-making processes.

On the other hand, in the United Kingdom and especially in London as one of the most multi-faith cities in Europe, the issue of planning for places of worship for religious minorities is not seen as a “problem”. In UK there are already around 1500 places of worship for Muslims and the establishment of new places is a matter of the local authorities in accordance with the National Framework and the strategic plans of the cities. However, there are studies and reports which demonstrate that even in UK planning for places of worship is not without problems (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004). Moreover, it is argued that less than 10 per cent of the total amount of worship places for Muslims in UK were purpose- built (Laurence, 2012). In this research by examining policies in London in order to see if there could be a lesson drawing for Athens, some recommendations about the UK planning policies may also be useful.

Problem statement

The speedy growth of Athens Muslim population over the last decade has posed a difficult task to the state in regard with the fulfillment of the needs of this religious group for official places of worship. Different governments through the country's history saw the establishment of official worship places as a “problem” and they failed to recognize that the capital of the country has become a de facto multi-faith city. The discourse about the national identity and the unbreakable bond between the state and the Orthodox Church did not help in forming planning policies that would help to tackle the issue.

In Greece, the concept of integration means accepting religious and cultural diversity to the point that this diversity does not circumvent the core values and vested rights of a

democratically organized society. Indicative practices of the religious faith of Muslims, such as clothing for women, do not subject to legislative regulation or prohibition. However, the parameter of religion is not taken into account in governments' actions towards promoting the integration of Muslims and thus there are not adopted policies aimed solely to integrating Muslims. In this context, it is becoming not only necessary but in fact vital for Greece to form long-term planning policies which will be more proactive in regard with the needs of faith groups and in the same time include them in the decision-making processes.

On the other hand, in UK as presented in the "Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London 2011", known as London Plan, addressing the needs of different faith groups is considered to be an issue of a great importance. Moreover, specific policies of the Plan present a direct link between planning for places of worship and social cohesion. The UK administrative authorities acknowledge that multi-faith communities should be recognized in policies that aim to promote social cohesion. The theoretical legitimacy of the religious minorities right of worship is one thing. The implementation of worship places as a formal recognition of this right is another. By examining these policies in London and their results in accordance with the lesson drawing theory, I try to see if there are lessons that could be used in Athens' context.

Research objective and research questions

This research aims to contribute to the discussion about planning worship places for religious minorities in Athens by acquiring lessons from United Kingdom's policies that could be helpful for Athens. The main objectives of this research is to examine how the policies and instruments such as the London Plan and the Supplementary Planning Guidance operate in the UK context and to explore if UK can provide lessons that could be relevant in the Greek context.

The lack of an agenda for planning worship places for religious minorities causes tensions within the wider society in Greece. Athens, the capital of the country is a city of almost 5 million people with a number of almost 700.00 Muslims and has already around 200 unofficial worship places that operate daily. Until now it seems that the Greek State chooses to be blind to the new societal transformations which are created due to the arrival of a great number of people with another religion than the prevailing. The on-going debate about places of worship for these religious groups focuses still on “whether” and not on “how” to plan for them. Lessons from London can be obtained in regard with planning for worship places and they can provide a framework in order to introduce an agenda of social cohesion and integration in Athens context.

The main question of this research is :

What role can planning play to the integration of the Muslim minority in Athens? Lesson drawing from London.

In order to answer this question, the sub-questions that need to be answered are :

- What is the theoretical link between social cohesion and planning for worship places?

For this question, scientific books and articles are used in order to understand how planning and especially planning for worship places is linked with the notions of social cohesion and integration in regard with religious groups. Moreover a brief presentation of technical and collaborative planning is made in order to provide the theoretical framework for understanding how the planning practice occurs in this two countries. Relevant keywords are : social cohesion, worship places, planning theory, integration, religious minorities, Muslims

- What are the main characteristics of planning for worship places in Athens so far?

For this question, this study examines the focal characteristics of Greek planning practice in general by using scientific literature, policy papers and internet governmental websites as a source. The institutional and cultural context is presented and analyzed in order to understand how planning occurs in Greece. In addition, the case study of the Central Mosque in Athens is used for examining, through scientific books and articles about the specific planning efforts in order to establish worship places for the Muslim minority. Relevant documents are found through the keywords : Athens, planning, religion, worship places, Muslims, central mosque

- What are the effects of the existence of unofficial worship places to social cohesion?

For answering this question the effects of the planning efforts in regard with the places of worship for Muslims are examined. This examination has a focus on the actual impacts of these efforts in the everyday life of Muslims in Athens. For this research question the report “Looking for spaces to coexist” by the Greek Orthodox Church, conducted in 2007, is used as source as well as scientific literature and internet websites. The keywords for searching the relevant documents are : Muslims, Athens, social cohesion, unofficial worship places, integration, social exclusion.

- Which are the new planning instruments in Athens context in regard with social cohesion and places of worship?

For answering this question I examine the “Strategic Plan for Athens 2021” as the main governmental planning instrument for social cohesion in the capital of the country. Although it does not contain explicitly the typology of “worship places” it provides the ground on which elements from lesson drawing from London could be added in order to form policies addressing the needs of the different faith groups that exist in the city.

- What are the planning efforts in London in regard with places of worship and what are the results of these efforts so far?

In order to answer this question, firstly I examine through scientific literature the main characteristics of UK planning. This provides the ground for specific policies about worship places as they are presented through two planning instruments, the “Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London 2011” also known as “London Plan” and the “Supplementary Planning Guidance to the London Plan” (SPG) . In order to reach conclusions about the results of the social cohesion agenda in London in regard with places of worship and see if there are lesson drawing opportunities for Athens’ context, this study examines evaluation documents from consultants and governmental web sites.

- What role can planning play to the integration of the Muslim minority in Athens? Lesson drawing from London.

Based on the analysis and the lesson drawing theory, the steps which planning practice in Athens needs to take in order to be more proactive in regard with the needs of the Muslim community are formulated and presented in the last chapter of the thesis.

Indication of method

The research relates to planning for worship places in London and Athens context in regard with social cohesion and the integration of the Muslim minority. The focus is on how lesson drawing from London can be helpful in Athens context. In order to do so, planning policies in

London and in Athens are examined to gain a broader understanding of how things work in these two countries.

In order to analyse the theoretical framework and the main social cohesion strategies in regard with planning for worship places in London and Athens, the research is based on literature review. The theoretical background is developed around two theoretical pillars : social cohesion and worship places for religious minorities and planning theory. This provides the base on which planning practices in the two countries are reviewed. Moreover, the theoretical background includes lesson drawing as the main methodological aspect of the thesis. Secondary data is gathered and reviewed in relation with the conceptual framework that is presented below. In particular and in order to understand how policies are working in UK and how these policies could be useful in Athens context, I examine through the secondary data the institutional arrangements and planning instruments of UK, the social cohesion agenda in relation with planning worship places in London and its results so far, the planning efforts in Athens and their effect to the existing Muslim minority and finally the relevance of lesson drawing theory.

The study use a qualitative research approach as it is more appropriate for complex social issues such as the religion in the public sphere, social cohesion and integration of religious minorities that this research is trying to grasp. As Neuman argues (2006) a qualitative approach can be very effective for grasping notions and for switching perspectives. Qualitative data are empirical and they involve studying written documents or documenting real events. Attention to social context is given in order to understand the social world (Neuman, 2006) and this means that a qualitative research presents what surrounds the case of study. While quantitative research rely on statistics, numbers and charts, qualitative research use a more complex data in order to “translate” them (Neuman, 2006) and make them more understandable. Since this research does not deal with quantitative data, a qualitative approach is more appropriate.

Qualitative and quantitative research differ in many ways but they can be complementary to each other. In social sciences, one of the differences between these two approaches lies to the nature of the data that the researchers have to collect and analyze in order to examine and explain patterns and concepts of the social sphere. Quantitative researchers, mainly, follow a linear research route and emphasize in measuring variables and testing hypotheses in terms of numbers while qualitative researchers follow a nonlinear path and are concerned more about the context (Neuman, 2006). Qualitative research instead of following a straight line, takes a more spiral path where with every repetition or cycle (Neuman, 2006), the researcher is able to collect new data and find new perceptions of the subject.

The case study of the Central Mosque in Athens was chosen in order to understand the contextual factors that influence Athens' Muslims in regard with the existence of unofficial worship places. Athens is the only European capital without an official place of worship for Muslims while in the same time has become the origin country for a great number for immigrants. The singularity, in the European Union context, of the case of Greece is revealed even in the simple data collection about the exact numbers of the people that cross its borders every day; there are no official numbers. As George and Bennett (2005) argue single case studies allow a researcher to achieve high levels of conceptual validity and to identify the indicators that best represent the relevant theoretical concepts. Moreover, case studies examine the operation of causal mechanisms in individual cases in detail (George and Bennett, 2005) and can be highly effective for "grasping subtle shades of meaning" (Neuman, 2006).

A literature review is the basis for this research in order to analyze the theoretical framework and the policies in the United Kingdom and especially in London. In explaining Athens context and the barriers that faith groups and in particular Muslims face in regard with the establishment of official worship places and also how the unofficial places that they exist influence their integration to the wider society, other qualitative methods such as interviews

could be used. However, the highly polarized situation in Greece and the fact that a great number of Muslims in Athens are undocumented do not facilitate this kind of research. London is chosen as it is a city with a bigger tradition in tackling issues of the integration of different faith groups and also because the related documents do not pose language barriers for the researcher. However, the limited time frame in which this thesis is conducted do not allow a more detailed and on ground research in London.

In this research, firstly by analysing documents such as books, articles, scholar and policy documents, concepts such as social cohesion and integration in regard with religion in the public sphere are presented. The role of planning is also presented and described by using scientific literature and policy documents and also methodological issues like lesson drawing are explained in more details as the final aim of this study is how could Athens planning practice could learn from London's case. Secondly, the case study of the central Mosque in Athens is analysed in order to gain insights about the planning practices in Greece though also scientific literature and policy documents. The results of this planning practice in terms of how the users (Muslims) perceive them are analysed through the report of the Greek Orthodox Church. Following, a new planning policy in Athens is presented and analysed through governmental documents and internet websites in order to see what are the current efforts in regard with social cohesion and worship places and how the concept of social cohesion is linked with faith groups .In order to use lesson drawing, the current situation in London is analysed through articles and specific policy papers and their results so far through assessment documents.

The starting point of this study is the definitions of interrelated notions such as social cohesion, social capital, social inclusion and exclusion and their link with planning for worship places. Athens institutional and cultural context are presented along with specific planning efforts which are analysed though the case study of the Central mosque. Moreover, in order to gain a better understanding of the current situation in regard with the great number of the unofficial

worship places in the city and the tensions that may arise in this context between the Muslim minority and the Orthodox population, a study that was conducted among Muslims is presented and analysed. The next step is to describe the new planning efforts through the Strategic Plan for Athens 2021 as the main planning policy for social cohesion in the city. This is followed by the presentation of planning practice in the United Kingdom and the examination of a specific planning policy and a supplementary guide regarding worship places in London with their results so far. Even though these two are not explicit programs about places of worship, both of them underscore the importance of provision in order to address the needs of different faith groups. Finally, lesson drawing from London that could be useful in Athens context is based on results so far which are expressed in available evaluation and assessment documents from consultants and governmental websites.

The research process is presented to the following conceptual framework :

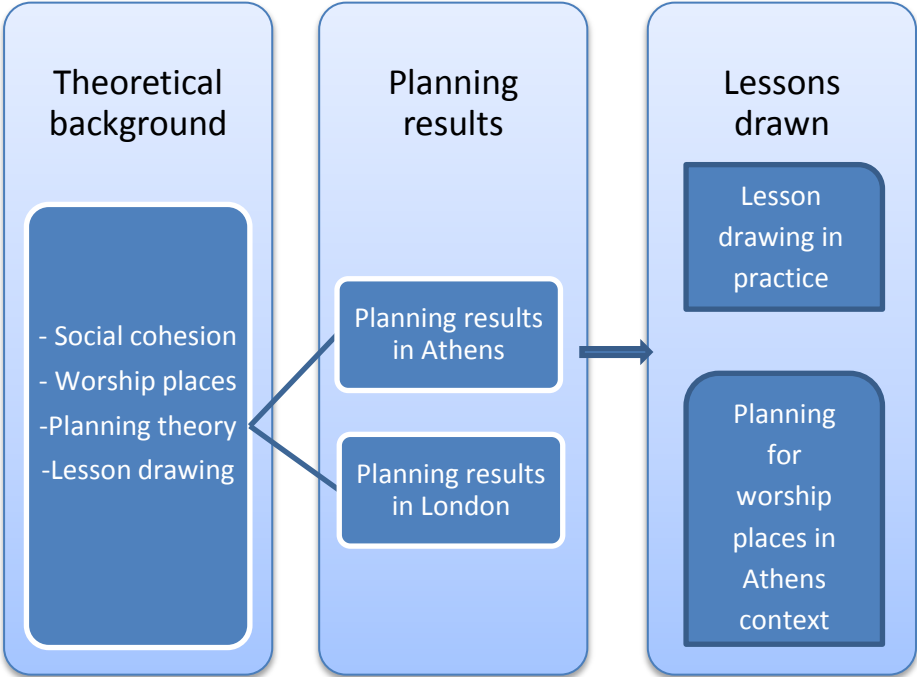


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework. Source : Author’s elaboration

Thesis Composition

The thesis is structured in six chapters. The first chapter presents the background, the problem statement and the research objectives and specific questions. Chapter two provides the theoretical framework with definitions of the notions of social cohesion, social inclusion and exclusion, integration and place attachment. It develops in further details the theoretical basis of the research and explains how lesson drawing theory can be useful for the research objective. In chapter three, Athens situation is presented in regard with planning for official worship places, by explaining the institutional context and the historical background and displaying the results of the planning practice so far. Moreover, it presents the new Strategic Plan for Athens. The next chapter includes policies about planning for worship places in London. Firstly, the institutional context is displayed and the background in regard with places of worship. The chapter continues with specific policies of the “London Plan 2011” and the Supplementary Planning Guidance for the London Plan Guide and their results so far. In the next chapter an analysis of the lesson drawing from London is displayed and how this could be useful in Athens context and the last chapter includes discussion about the findings of the thesis as well as recommendations.

Theoretical Framework

The chapter provides the theoretical framework of this research. It intends to interpret the connections between the concepts of social cohesion in regard with planning for worship places for religious minorities and especially Muslims. The two theoretical pillars that are used for carrying out this research are social cohesion and planning theory. Two selected parts of planning theory are addressed; technical planning and collaborative planning. These two provide the base on which planning practices in the two countries are reviewed and analysed

while they offer support to the suggestions on how planning can contribute to social cohesion. Moreover, the chapter elaborates on lesson drawing theory in relation with policies in order to examine how this can answer the main research question.

Social cohesion, social capital and inclusion

When examining the concept of social cohesion, we should first consider its multi-dimensional character. As Friedkin (2004, p.409) argues social cohesion should be seen as “[...] a domain of causally interrelated phenomena or as a class of causal models, in which some of the major dimensions[...] occupy different theoretical positions with respect to one another as antecedent, intervening, or outcome variables”. However, as Kearns and Forrest (2000) point out there are five domains of social cohesion: common values and a civic culture; social order and social control; social solidarity and reduction in wealth disparities; place attachment and shared identity; and social networks and social capital.

Putnam perceives social capital as a key element in social organization and specifies it as the ‘features of social life – networks, norms and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives’ (Putnam, 1996, p. 56). He recognizes two types of social capital ; bonding and bridging social capital. The former can be described as social ties between a homogenous group while the latter is more broad and less intensive can be specified as an association that is formed between different social groups. Social capital function both in a micro-social individual level and in a macro-social collective level (Borgatti, Jones & Everett, 1998).

A lot of strategies and policies around the world used as their ground the concept of social cohesion from Putnam (Mayer, 2003) and a growing amount of academic articles deal with this concept (Halpern, 2004). As Forrest and Kearns argue: “social cohesion is about getting by and getting on at the more mundane level of everyday life” (Forrest and Kearns 2001,p.2127).

Nevertheless, the measurement of social capital is not an easy task. Due to different definitions of the concept there are different empirical studies which use an ad hoc methodology for measuring social capital, focusing primarily on questions regarding the confidence and participation in groups and social networks. It is striking that in the literature there are at least 20 definitions of the concept of social capital (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 2000; Putnam,1993; Paldam, 2000).

As Rudiger and Spencer (2004, p.9) argue “ ... social cohesion does not require communities to merge into an homogeneous entity ...On the contrary cohesion can be achieved in a pluralist society through the interaction of different communities that build a bond through the recognition of difference and interdependence”. As Vranken (2004) argues, it is possible to achieve high social cohesion between different groups by structuring non-conflicting relations at lower spatial levels. However, as Healey (1997a) points out, strong cohesion in a group may exclude its members from possible choices that may be generated from connections outside the group. A society with social cohesion was seen from Dahrendorf et al. (1995, p.Viii) as a society which basically prevents social exclusion: “Social cohesion comes in to describe a society which offers opportunities to all its members within a framework of accepted values and institutions. Such a society is therefore one of inclusion. People belong; they are not allowed to be excluded”. Thus, social cohesion provides a more general approach than social inclusion. While social cohesion seeks a wider societal responsibility social inclusion focus on specific objectives and policies (Novy et al., 2012).

Cameron (2006) has demonstrated how the concept of 'inclusion' ,when appears in the literature, it is presented as the opposite of 'exclusion' and for this reason the discussion of social inclusion is, in a way, overshadowed by social exclusion. Moreover, the notion of social cohesion is conceptualized either in a policy context to specify the means and the rationale for public strategies or as an analytical form to explain social, political and economic changes (Hulse and Stone 2007). A large part of the literature about social cohesion examines it as a policy concept (Hulse and Stone 2007; Dukes and Musterd 2012 ;Kearns and Forrest 2000) and is

concerned more about its dimensions. Putnam (2000) argues that by strengthen the feeling of “us” to improve social cohesion in a particular group, the quality of the relations with other groups may decline. In Greece the tensions between insular and the wider social cohesion are more obvious than ever. Athens is facing one of the most important challenge is its recent history, the maintaining and improvement of social cohesion in the context of deep economic and social crisis. In these circumstances new tensions appear in the public sphere. Religion starts to be regarded as a barrier for integration of new incomers and the 'different' is not easy tolerated let alone embraced.

There is a significant body of literature that is concerned about the integration of Europe's Muslims. However, even though the recognition and accommodation of religious practices seems to be one of the main elements to this integration, there is not enough discussion about the importance of official worship places in the everyday life of Muslims. The institutional adaptation of Islamic organizations, the significance of embracing the national citizenship from Muslims, policies about education and cultural adaptation are discussed but there is not enough evidence about how the ability to perform the rituals of their religion in a proper way in an official place of worship helps the integration of this part of the population in the wider society.

An understanding of how places of worship are perceived from religious groups is essential for explaining the role of planning in regard with social cohesion. Attachment to a place “facilitates a sense of security and well-being, defines group boundaries and stabilizes memories” (Gieryn, 2000, p. 481). As Brown & Perkins (1992, p. 280) argue physical settings such as homes, ethnic enclaves, and worship places can all “reflect and shape people’s understandings of who they are as individuals and as members of groups”. Moreover as argued by scholars, places promote a “sense of community, of being part of a larger group, whether a family or a neighborhood” (Orum & Chen, 2003, p. 11).

Places of worship are identified as spaces of belonging as the faith group recreate its community identity through religious rituals (Orsi 1999, Leonard et al. 2005). As Metcalf (1996) argues, especially for Muslim migrants mosques have a specific significance that cannot be explained only by theological obligations (Metcalf, 1996). By rituals the members connect with the group as a whole (Geertz, 1993) and by doing this the sense of unity is reinforced (Durkheim, 1965). Durkheim also argued that religious rituals and symbols are representations of the social group. By participating in group rituals, individual members renew their link with the group and they reaffirm shared meanings (Durkheim, 1965:257). Beaumont and Cloke (2012) acknowledge the fact that houses of prayer tend to strengthen bonding social capital and especially for Muslims as their religion is a basic element of their identity (Baker and Beaumont, 2011) the existence of worship places in the cities that they live in, is important for their everyday life.

In regard with Muslims in Europe, scholars argue that through their demand for places of worship they introduce the issue about a place for them in the social life (Klausen 2005, Cesari 2004). Moreover, Muslims play an important role in the discourse about the presumed failures of multiculturalism and the urge for more long term social cohesion policies (Phillips 2006, Mitchell 2004). Places of worship manifest the religious presence (Eickelman, 1989) and as Amin (2002) states faith buildings may produce places where people 'negotiate difference' and exceed the normal boundaries of interaction. Furthermore, mosques constitute a way for Islam to exit the private sphere and to enter the public one (Allievi, 2009) by being the base from which the religious minority organizes its activities (Cesari, 2005). To this extent, the mosque "forms a central expression of the visibility of Islam in the local public sphere" (Allievi, 2009).

As cities become more diverse, treating equally different religious groups emerges as an important issue. Addressing their needs in regard with worship places is a subject that in its core includes elements of social justice and equity. As most religious practices revolve around a building, it is clear that by providing for example churches for Christian communities while at

the same time Muslim groups are confronted with difficulties in establishing mosques, issues of inequality and exclusion are raised. The existence of religion places in the cities is an indication of the degree to which society, allows its members to worship their God and express their religious beliefs equally and the challenge in the contemporary multi-faith cities is how religion can be a factor to strengthen social cohesion.

Thus, the integration of different faith groups in the wider society arises as a challenging topic. The term "integration" according to Durkheim has two main meanings ; the first refers to the process of setting and conservation of the society as a whole (Intégration de la société) and the second refers to the integration of the individual in the society i.e the relations between the individual and society (Intégration à la société) where this integration shows the intensity of the positive and unique relationship between the individual and society (Papadopoulou 2006). Often the term "social inclusion" is used instead of "integration" because both describe the key to participation process, or the lack of participation of the individual in a social system.

Conversely, the term "integration" is not general and vague and neither has the same meaning in all historical and national contexts. It is a product of social negotiation and political interpretation and depends on the political and social circumstances and the specificities of every society. Social exclusion is a complex phenomenon that has both economic and non-economic dimensions. There are processes of exclusion of citizens that, in essence, they constitute denial and non- realization of social rights by referring to the restrictions on their access to social goods and services regardless of whether the limitations are intentional or not. The lack of official worship places constitutes a manifestation of social exclusion as in fact it poses a restriction on the exercise of one of the most basic and constitutional rights of people such as the right to freedom to practice their religious rituals. Thus, an important issue is to examine how can planning facilitate the process of the integration of religious minorities in the wider society.

Planning theory

Planning is carried out generally by state bodies in cooperation with other institutional arrangements and relevant stakeholders. However, as Allmendinger (2009, p. 27) argues planners are not “free agents able to objectively investigate, explore or challenge existing discourses or theories”. Their role is influenced by certain state policies, arrangements and established power relations. As the case study of the central Mosque in Athens further illustrates, these power relations are not met only between institutions but also between different social groups. As Sandercock (1998) argues when planning is seen merely as a technocratic approach is race- and gender-blind, culturally homogenizing and anti-democratic.

Rational Planning

The base of rational planning is positivism which through empirical observations tried to uncover “relationships between objects” (Allmendinger, 2009, p.32). In rational planning there is an underlying assumption that once the “problem” that needs to be addressed is fully identified and objectives have been set, a rational approach could meet these objectives in the most efficient way. The peak of practice of rational planning was in the 1960’s when many European countries had basic problems with infrastructure caused by the Second World War. In this context, planning practice had to deal with highly technical issues. Therefore, a “scientific” approach of an implementation of a routine with decision-making present in every stage of the process (Allmendinger, 2009) seemed the right thing to do.

The complexity of planning was not fully ignored by people who were associated with rational planning theory. Faludi recognized that in the complex world of planning there are possible different programs that could meet given objectives, however he considered the choice between them as a part of the objectives (Allmendinger P., 2009) and not as an element that could change the way planning occurs. His idea of rationality was based on an ideal process : setting the objectives, locating the programs to meet them, choosing a program and

implementing it (Allmendiger P., 2009).

In the 1960's planners were considered as technocrats who should concentrate in processes or procedures whilst politicians set the objectives (Allmendiger, 2009). As Faludi saw planning as the best way to produce results (1973, p.5), the planner's role within rational planning was that of the expert. Planners should act as research scientists; gather the necessary data, and search for the best methodology while using rational criteria (Allmendiger, 2009). Although in rational planning the different levels of governance are recognised, there is a centralisation of power and decision-making. Rational decision-making is concerned with facts, means and efficiency and it is not related to ends (Allmendiger, 2009). This makes rational planning suitable and effective when dealing with particularly technical issues. Nevertheless, in complex issues that they don't have only technical but also social aspects a more comprehensive approach is needed.

Communicative planning

Within an increasing diverse and complex society, the limits of technical rationality which was approaching issues under the prism of a unique solution to all problems were more clear. These limits are not only structural and theoretical but also practical (Allmendiger, 2009). Issues of social justice, equity and democracy were not addressed properly within the practice of rational planning. There was a necessity for communication between decision-makers and the wider society (Allmendiger, 2009). Interests of smaller groups should be taken under consideration (Sager, 2009) and planning had to transform into an interactive governance process within the complex and dynamic environments (Healey, 2003).

Collaborative planning recognized the changing nature of society (Allmendiger, 2009) and by working toward consensus it proposes the decentralisation of power (Healey, 2003). Healey points out that by constructing the institutional parameters of the game and reinventing the institutional web of the city, governance is able to be more affective (Healey, 1998). By building

strong relationships among stakeholders a lot of problems in the process of planning can be prevented. With collaborative planning, planners were helped to understand the different power relations between social groups and tried to put that knowledge in their plans. Nevertheless, these power relations are unequal and the “just city” (Campbell S. and Fainstein S., 2003) where participation is a part of public-decision making, still remains an utopia.

As Healey has put it “ the real exclusion is from the processes of governance” (Healey, 1997, p. 108) and communicative planning is looking towards understanding, discussion and participation of the members of the community (Allmendiger, 2009). However, the participation in planning does not guarantee a de facto “good” result. Even though power relations between social groups change through history and at some point they remain stable, as Flyvbjerg states (1998) the stability of these relations does not indicate justice as there are not axiomatically equally balanced. It is not insured that people who are poor and underprivileged or members of minority religious groups can take part to the decision-making. Nonetheless, it would be oversimplified to say that participation in decision-making processes is the answer to all issues. The implementation of collaborative practice is complicated not only because of institutional or even financial resources barriers but also because of power relations and issues of equity.

These two practices of rational planning and communicative planning were chosen to be included in the theoretical background as the first illustrates how planning occurs in Athens so far in regard with places of worship for Muslims and the latter portraits the way forward to more proactive policies for both Athens and London. This will be elaborated more in the chapter of the case study of the central Mosque in Athens as well as in the last chapter of recommendations.

Lesson Drawing

Despite the efforts of the European Union (EU) to push towards common policies in every sector for its Member States, cultural as well as historical reasons are always present to remind us the diversity of Europe. Planning systems and practices within the borders of the EU do not escape this rule. It is impressive that even the term “planning” is perceived and implemented differently in European countries. As Friedmann (2005) argues, when we use the notion of “planning” in Europe we are in front of different historical conceptions. It is this specificity of the historical, cultural and institutional context that lead to the development of diverse planning policies and practices in different countries.

Policy transfer and lesson drawing according to Dolowitz and Marsh (1996) is when knowledge of policies, tools of administration, institutions and arrangements in one place and/or time can be used in the development of policies, administrative arrangement and institutions in another place and/ or time. They make a distinction of seven objects of transfer : policy goals, structure and content; policy instruments or administrative techniques; institutions; ideology; ideas, attitudes and concepts and negative lessons. According to Rose (1988) the main hypothesis in drawing lessons from another country is that : “similarities are greater within a given program across national boundaries than among different programs within a country” (Rose, 1988). Dolowitz and Marsh (1996) further argue that policies or programs with a high degree of complexity are more difficult to be transferred. Rose (Lesson-drawing in Public Policy, pp.132-4) proposes six hypotheses in regard with the relation between the complexity and the transferability of a program :

- Programs with single goals are more transferable than programmes with multiple goals
- The simpler the problem the more likely transfer will occur
- The more direct the relationship between the problem and the “solution” is perceived to be, the more likely it is to be transferred
- The fewer the perceived side effects of a policy the greater the possibility of transfer

- The more information agents have about how a programme operates in another location the easier is to transfer
- The more easily outcomes can be predicted the simpler a programme is to transfer

Rose (1993) further suggests that searching for lessons becomes essential when current policies stop contributing in finding “solutions”. Moreover, according to Dolowitz and Marsh (1996) most of the literature suggests that one of the main reasons for voluntary policy transfer is a general dissatisfaction or a specific problem with the existing conditions. Although dissatisfaction is the proof that something is not working right, it does not answer the question how can this be fixed (Rose, 1991). Rose (1991) further points out that the definition of a satisfactory programme, is not without problems. However, she argues that whilst programs can be examined in relation to past performance, they can also be judged by comparison with what is done elsewhere. Nonetheless, a programme or a policy it is set in a wider cultural, historical and institutional context and therefore it is important to recognize the differences of the specific conditions. According to Rose (1991) an important aspect in lesson- drawing is the transferability of a policy from one place to another and she distinguishes five options for lesson- drawing : copying, emulation, hybridization, synthesis and inspiration. Nevertheless, lesson-drawing is concomitant with evaluation. When learning from another country a judgement about the results of the specific policies is necessary (Rose, 1991). A positive lesson can be drawn if this country is tackling a specific problem in a better way.

Rose (2002) proposes ten steps in learning lessons : Firstly the problem at home has to be identified. Secondly the selection of the country that the lesson will be drawn from has to be done having in mind aspects such as the ideological compatibility, the similarities in resources, psychological and not necessarily geographical proximity, availability of evidence and interdependence. The third step involves the inspection of how the program works there on the ground in order to see it from the inside and not from a distance. Forth step is about the abstract lesson- drawing model which identifies the cause and effect relationships and

moreover includes the necessary elements that make the program work such as the rules for action translated in laws and regulations, the administrative arrangements, the personnel requirements, financial resources and program recipients. Next step is about designing the lesson determined by whether the lesson is an adaptation, a synthesis of models or an hybrid, or an inspiration by learning. The two following steps involve the desirability of the lesson and the concerns about its actual use by making a judgment about whether the program could operate at home and by examining constraints and resource requirements. The eighth step is concerned about the identification of the contextual parameters such as the institutional arrangements in the home country as the national context has an impact on the operation of a program. The following step propose a prospective assessment in order to reduce the mistakes that are likely to occur in the new program. After the evaluation and the indication that a lesson can be applied the last step is about the marketing of the lesson by increasing its captivation through asserting future benefits and by using the name of the lesson drawing country as a promising symbol.



Figure 2 : Ten steps for lesson drawing. Source : Based on Rose (2002), author's elaboration

However, we must not forget that the transfer of policy is not a simple subject. The dangers of transplanting planning instruments that are illustrated by Van Dijk (2005) are present in the case of the UK and Greece too and they are elaborated more in the discussion chapter.

Planning in Greece

This chapter answers to the second sub-question and aims to present the current situation in Athens in regard with the policies for official worship places and the problems that occur through the case study of the central Mosque in Athens. The chapter introduces the institutional context of planning in Greece and it shows what actions have been taken in order to deal with the needs of the Muslim minority in the capital of the country. Moreover, it presents the Strategic Plan of Athens 2021 as the main governmental planning strategy for social cohesion in Athens.

Administrative arrangements and planning instruments

The main characteristic of the Greek planning system is the prevalence of a hierarchical and centralized planning style and the large number of laws and regulations which in many cases are not only without coherence but even contradictory (Serraos et al. in Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009). However, this system especially during the last 20 years is confronted with the European Union policies that have to be incorporated in the national legislation as well as the undergoing changes in the societal and economic behaviours in the country. The relationships between the different levels of administration are defined by the Greek Constitution. The parliament is the main legislative body which dictates the procedures for spatial planning in the country through laws and regulations. Through these regulations the Parliament sets the national framework so that other governmental bodies such as Ministries can issue the secondary legislation. In the field of spatial planning the government is represented by the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change which sets the National Planning policy for the country. The National Planning Policy is set at three spatial levels : the national level, the regional level and the local level.

National and regional level

On these two levels spatial planning is regulated primarily by the Law 2742/99 on "Land Use Planning and Sustainable Development" (Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate change). Based on this law, a national strategic plan, the "General Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development", sets the specific goals in regard with development. The direct products of the above law are the "Regional Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development" and the "Special Frameworks for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development" (Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate change).

Local level

On the local level there are two central planning instruments; the "General Urban Plan" (GUP) and the "Town Plan Study"(TPS). The GUP covers the area of a municipality by giving the main directions for its spatial development and the TPS ,based on these directions, provides the specific land-use. Local authorities are responsible for the development of the GUP and the TPS while both of them have to be approved by the Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Change. After this approval, they become binding both for the administration and individuals especially in regard with land-use determinations and building regulations. Especially for metropolitan areas and large urban centres like Athens there are more specific planning strategies. Three plans for Athens has been established during the last 30 years; the "Structural Metropolitan Plan" of 1985 and 1997, with the Laws 1515/85 and 2508/97 respectively, and the new Strategic Plan for Athens 2021.

For an external observer, the framework that was presented above seems rather clear. However, as stated by an expert in Greek planning law in the preface of his study of Greek planning legislation "It is not simply difficult, but almost impossible to acquire a complete overview, but also to tame the nomothetic chaos of town planning law, so as to process it systematically and with lasting value. Laws, regulatory statutes (presidential decrees and ministerial decisions),

circulars, etc., the documents concerning issues of town planning legislation, are produced in a torrential, I would say industrial line, process, especially in view, every time, of an electoral period.....” (Choromidis 1994 :9). As Knieling and Othenfragen (2009) argue, the specific cultural and institutional framework that planning occurs includes processes among stakeholders and their cultural frames as well as specific tools and procedures and in the case of Greece the inability to form long term policies and the little understanding of the differences between policy making and law making are still present. Instead of formulating general policies about important issues, laws are issued ad hoc under the pressure of specific problems.

Planning for worship places

In regard with the construction of worship places, the framework is rather complicated and it includes at least two different levels of administration. On the first level officials are responsible only for the permit for the operation of a worship place while the second level is concerned about the building itself. The Greek Constitution, in article 13, sets three conditions that have to be fulfilled in order for the administration to consider giving a permit for the operation of an official worship place to a religious group. These conditions are that the “religion has to be without a hidden agenda , it does not practice proselytism and the rituals of public worship are consistent with the public order and morality” (Hellenic Parliament). The relevant administrative authorization for the worship places, except Orthodox churches, is given by the Minister of Education and Religion Affairs, after the verification that firstly the above conditions of the Constitution are fulfilled. Moreover, there is a series of laws that have to be taken in mind when the authorization is given.

Furthermore, the legislation makes a separation between a “temple” and a “worship house”. An oratory of a small size which is in a private property and it is destined to serve as a place of worship by a limited circle of people is treated from the laws as a “worship house”, as opposed to the “temple” which is intended for a bigger number of people (Circular 69230/3/2014). The

establishment and the operation of a temple requires that the application is signed by at least fifty families , while for licensing a worship house a number of five people is considered sufficient (Circular 69230/3/2014). After the general authorization from the Ministry of Education and Religion Affairs, a request for the establishment or the construction of the worship place has to be made to the local municipality.

However as the Greek planning legislation is an actual labyrinth made of national laws, Presidential decrees and court decisions that have not yet translated into laws and policy documents issued by different Ministries (Serraos et al. 2005; Wassenhoven et al. 2000), faith groups face major difficulties when applying for places of worship. Since 1987 a Presidential Decree determines the land use in general as well as the areas that worship places can be built or operate. According to this Decree, a worship place can legally operate only in areas that are explicitly regulated. However, these areas are not exclusively for worship places as the classification for them in the Decree is “Other Uses” and it includes social infrastructure in general such as sport facilities, libraries as well as places of worship. For example, if a faith group want to establish a place of worship in an area that is permitted to do so, the relevant legislation does not make clear not even the time frame in which the local government has to reply to the application, not to mention other more important aspects.

The Central Mosque and the unofficial places of worship

In order to answer the second sub-question I examine the results of the planning practices so far in regard with places of worship. I choose the case of the central Mosque in Athens as representative of how these planning practices occur. Moreover, and through a research that was conducted from the Support Centre of Immigrants of the Greek Church in regard with the places of worship for Muslims in Athens, I examine the tensions that arise due to the existence of these unofficial places.

The construction of a mosque in Athens is a standing demand of the Muslim minority (Tsitselikis 2004). They ask not only for the legitimacy of their right of religious worship which is given to them by the Greek Constitution but also the implementation of official worship places for the expression of their faith (Tsitselikis, in Paul and Christopoulos 2004). The discussion for the construction of a mosque in Athens started back in 1880 and it resulted to a legislation in 1913 for the construction of one mosque in Athens and four in others cities of the country. Although at the time the number of Muslims in other regions such as Epirus, Limnos, Chios, Crete and Thessaly was around 550.000, the relevant promises were never materialized because the size of Athens Muslim population was considered to be small (Tsitselikis, in Paul and Christopoulos, 2004).

The issue reappeared in 1934 when the Greek state promised to the king of Egypt an area for the construction of a mosque and an Islamic Foundation for "the strengthening of Greek-Egyptian ties and improve the position of the Greek community in Egypt" (Tsitselikis, in Paul and Christopoulos, 2004: 283). The law was not implemented again in this case. New negotiations began in 1978, between the Saudi King Khalid and the government. Among other discussions and agreements, it was announced that the Greek state is not opposed to the establishment of a mosque in Athens but for one more time no progress were made in the subject (Tsitselikis, in Paul and Christopoulos 2004).

However, the event that caused a broad public discourse in 2000 about the mosque and put the subject again in the governmental agenda was not so much the demand of the Muslim communities for an official place of worship but rather the preparation of the city of Athens for the Olympic Games of 2004. Political parties, diplomatic circles as well as the press argued that the Muslim athletes and visitors should be able to pray in a proper worship place and not in garages and basements. After all this pressure the government promised to build an Islamic cultural centre and a mosque on the occasion of the upcoming Olympic Games. The mosque

would be built “in the spirit of the multicultural democratic Europe of which Greece is a part” (Foreign Minister at the time, George Papandreou) after it was admitted that “migration has made the necessity for a mosque even greater, because Athens’ Muslim population has gotten that much bigger’ (Smith , in Karyotis and Patrikios 2010). The area that was identified as proper for the construction of the mosque was outside the city of Athens in a location near the international airport in Paiania. At the time, the construction of any place of worship required not only the authorization of the Minister of National Education and Religious Affairs but also that of the local Orthodox Bishop. While the church officials said that they do not oppose to the construction in general they also stated that the area was so close to the airport that the first thing that people who travelled to Greece was going to see was a minaret and that fact could not be accepted from the Orthodox church. As a result, once more the plan was never implemented. The Olympic games started and finished and no mosque was constructed.

It is notable that until 2006 for any establishment of a worship place ,other than an Orthodox church, the local Orthodox bishop had to give his authorization. However, in 2006 this was changed by a new law which stated that the authorization should be given by the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs. With the same law the construction of a mosque in Elaionas, near the centre of Athens was decided. It specified that the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs would be entirely responsible for both its construction and the necessary fund and that it would be administrated by a Board appointed by the same Ministry. The mosque would be constructed on public funds and the Ministry would make the decisions for all related expenses. Nonetheless and despite the fact that in legal terms the Orthodox church was not anymore an authorization entity, there were again formal objections to the idea of a minaret in the city centre. Orthodox bishops argued that it is a “disturbing sight” for the Greek people who live in the wider area. The discussion between the government and the Orthodox church continued until the April of 2010 when the state announced that the mosque would be built without a minaret and with a capacity of 500 people. That plan changed once more in September of 2011 when new legislation passed through the parliament for a mosque without a minaret and with a total capacity of 350 people. It is notable that it was not until last

May, almost three years after the last relevant legislation, that the construction of the Mosque started.

Unofficial worship places and the public prayer

The planning practice so far and the great number of laws that were never implemented in combination with the rapid increase of the number of Muslims resulted to the existence and operation of a large number of unofficial worship places (Tsitselikis, in Paul and Christopoulos 2004). It is noteworthy that back in 2004 their number was estimated around 100 (Tsitselikis, in Paul and Christopoulos 2004) whilst today informal sources put the number up to almost 200. Warehouses, basements and abandoned buildings have become for Muslims informal places for exercising their religious worship. These places cannot meet the requirements of a mosque and they operate under a semi-legality. Unofficial worship places can function unifying for Muslims, because they act as a source of individual constituent of their religion identity and they can be interpreted as places in which Muslims maintain and develop intimacy, socialization, and solidarity. However, at the same time they separate them from the wider society (US Department Report, 2013).



Figure 3 : Unofficial worship place in Athens after attack. Source : <http://www.ksm.gr/emprismos-tzamiou-plateia-attikis/>

This is in accordance with the findings of a research which was conducted by the Support Center of Immigrants of the Greek Orthodox Church in 2007. The research was both quantitative and qualitative and its aims were to record and map the unofficial worship places of Muslims in Athens and to detect and investigate the discriminations and prejudice against the Muslims. The lack of sufficient data on Athens Muslims led the Greek Church to conduct this research in order to derive informative material for the design and implementation of policies on the acceptance of religious difference. These actions included in the action plan of Greek Church entitled "Looking for spaces to coexist". The research took place in 2007 when the prevailing conditions were different from today that racist speech is more often associated with racist violence against immigrants and especially mostly from Asian and African countries. However, then, as now, the immigration government policies do not take into account that a significant proportion of the immigrant population of Greece is of another religion than the prevailing Orthodox (Looking for Spaces to coexist, 2007)

In the report, an issue that often emerges is the problem of Muslims maintaining their religious identity in an environment that is almost entirely Christian. This relates, above all, to the refusal of the Greek state to meet some of their demands and first and foremost the construction of a mosque and a cemetery for Muslims. The findings of the report also suggest that Muslims feel that there is not "Islamophobia" in Greece and that the Muslim presence is not perceived identical with the possibility of a terrorist action rather there is a false identification of Muslims as Turks. In regard with the everyday prayer and the celebration of Ramadan they argue that the performance of their rituals is not easy. According to the people that were interviewed the failure to meet their demands for worship places increases the distance that separates them from the Greeks. This sense of distance and treatment based on discrimination prevents the meaningful dialogue and their integration into the wider Greek society. Furthermore they often compare the situation in Greece with what happens in other European countries and they argue that this situation cannot exist in a democratic country.

Furthermore these findings are reinforced by the example of the Muslims public prayer in Athens. On November of 2010 thousands of Muslims gathered in 14 central squares of Athens in order to celebrate Bajram, one of the most important celebrations for Islam, with public prayers. As scholars argue, as their demand for the central mosque in Athens was once again not addressed by the State, they wanted to demonstrate their claim for the necessity of a formal place to perform the rituals of their religion (Hatziprokopiou and Evergeti, 2014). In spite the fragmentation of the Muslim community in Athens, as it includes people from Asia, Africa and Middle East as well as people with the Greek nationality and the fact that these prayers were performed in different spaces in accordance to people's ethnicity, the common ground was the request for a central mosque. These prayers by being public illustrated in a clear way that their religious needs are not met in Athens. By choosing landmark locations of the centre of the city such as the Propylaia and Omonoia square they wanted to demonstrate their visibility and in that way express a public statement that they are also a part of the city's residents.



Figure 4 : Public Prayer in Propylaia Source : <http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/tag/prayers/>

The case study of the Central Mosque in Athens illustrates the absence of long-term policies in regard with places of worship and a *laissez-faire*, not in economical but rather in social terms, situation. Planning for mosques is not included into urban planning programs as their religious meaning is underscored and they are treated as a “problem”. The large number of the unofficial worship places and the public Muslim prayers that are conducted every year since 2010 underline the need to the creation of an integration policy which takes into consideration the new multi-faith reality in the capital of the country.

New planning instruments : The Strategic Plan for Athens 2021

In this sub-chapter and in order to examine what are the new planning efforts in regard with places of worship, the Strategic Plan for Athens 2021 is presented as the main planning instrument for the capital of the country. The previous SPA's were established in 1985 and 1997 and they included a series of directions, objectives, programs and measures which defined and affected the spatial and urban organization of the wider area of Attiki in accordance with specific five-year plans. Even though they considered to be pioneer tools for the coordination and the harmonization of the policies between the central, regional and local authorities and other involved organizations, over the years it became clear that they needed adaptation. This adaptation was dictated by the new circumstances and governing conditions both at a national and a European level as well as by the changes on the social, economic and environmental level (Strategic Plan for Athens 2021).

In this context, the main objective of the SPA 2021 is the harmonization of the regulatory framework for the development of Athens with the current economic and social conditions as well as the actual needs and growth prospects (Strategic Plan for Athens 2021). The strategic plan consists of the strategic goals for the area up to 2021 and beyond, the operating tools for

the achievement of those goals and the sectorial policies and supplementary measures which are being hierarchized and evaluated through the Action Plan. The basic objectives of the plan are:

- A socially just, balanced and environmentally sustainable economic development with the strengthening of Athens' international role by improving the competitiveness and promoting the innovation
- The improvement of the quality of life for all the residents by promoting policies that mitigate social exclusion phenomena and equalization in the allocation of development resources and benefits, perceived as basic conditions for sustainable economic growth and social cohesion.
- Environmentally sustainable spatial development with effective and consistent protection of both the environment and the cultural heritage as well as preservation of the natural space and biodiversity and adaptation to climate change (Strategic Plan for Athens 2021)

The Strategic Plan besides other key concepts such as the environment and urban revitalisation, includes also the concept of “social cohesion” and it recognises it as a major challenge. Within the main objective of improving the quality of life of all residents the Plan defines the priority area of “Urban planning and development”. The strategy for the policies in this area is governed by the principles of a balanced growth model for the region which incorporates both the environmental and the social dimensions (Strategic Plan for Athens 2021). In result, one of the main objectives of the module is to alleviate the social inequalities and compact social exclusion phenomena and to integrate the particular distinctive cultures and identities of different social groups. This objective is further analysed to three basic targets which are presented below (Strategic Plan for Athens 2021) :

1. The promotion of the principle of the coherent city in regard with the population growth and residential needs
2. The promotion of the policies for the diffusion to the local and wider community of the benefits accruing from the increased ability to utilize soil resources
3. Improving efficiency and stimulating the internal coherence of the system design of urban policies

The priorities are the optimization of the use and exploitation of urban land through political civil reconstruction in order to tackle the population growth and social needs, the link of strategic planning with urban policies through the general development plan and the strengthening of the participatory processes with the social stakeholders by clarifying the roles and the division of the responsibilities and by promoting cooperation between the central and the local government (Strategic Plan for Athens 2021). Especially in regard with distinctive cultures and different social groups the main priority is to improve the community services as well as the social infrastructure and address the social exclusion phenomena. The Plan has not produced any results yet as the time frame since it was established is relatively small. Nevertheless, even by examining the document itself some important issues arise. Firstly, even though it uses the concepts of social cohesion and inclusion of different social groups it does not provide specific guidance for planning authorities. Furthermore, as it based more on maps it tries to control land-use and does not make clear how different stakeholders could be included in the planning process. The danger that concepts like “social cohesion” being used as a figure of speech is still present. Having said that, the Strategic Plan could be the basis for specific policies for different faith groups in regard with places of worship. This is explored more in the chapter of the lesson drawing from London.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that the Greek planning system during the 1980s and the 1990s was supplemented with a line of effective instruments there are still several weaknesses (Serraos et al. 2005, Wassenhoven et al. 2000) that make the planning practice difficult. The chaotic and fragmentary legislation, the absence of long-term policies and strategies as well as the informal and ad hoc adjustments to already established situations together with the lack of public involvement and the delaying procedures set the general frame in which planning practice occurs (Serraos et al. 2005, Wassenhoven et al. 2000). Furthermore, the Greek planning system is not considered to be effective due to the fact that the central government makes the most important decisions (Baiba et al, 2005). Moreover, according to Wassenhoven et al. (2005), there is evidence that the local authorities are unwilling to engage in planning competences which they consider risky for their public esteem.

Especially in regard with the establishment of official worship places, the case study of the central mosque in Athens demonstrates clearly the insufficiency of the current planning system to deal with the needs of religious minorities and the tergiversation of administration. Instead of formulating long-term planning policies and programs, Greek governments through the country's history chose to deal with religious minorities issues in a rather fragmented way by facing these issues as "problems". The needs of different religious groups and especially Muslims are not addressed even though that the capital of the country is a city which its' current population of the Muslim minority is around 700.000 and it increases day by day.

The case study of the central mosque in Athens displays that there is no provision in planning policies specifically for worship places. In addition, it demonstrates the absence of engagement of representatives of the Muslim minority in the planning process. The planning practice in the country is linked directly with the epistemology of rational planning and its technocratic

approach. There is an absence of even basic elements of communicative planning that would help to form processes where the Muslim minority could participate. Moreover, the case study illustrates the weakness of the Greek state to design and effectively implement practices to ensure the substantial integration of Muslims in the new context that is shaped by the social changes at a national and European level. Although the arrival of a large number of immigrants with an Islamic identity leads to a transformation of Greek society, this fact should not be viewed as a problem but as a starting point for the establishment of integration policies. Up to date the consultation with Muslim representatives is done in an ostensible way for rather tactical reasons and public relations and there is not an institutional consultation structure to ensure the continuity and reliability of this participation.

The Strategic Plan of Athens 2021 provides some rather fade guidance for local authorities in regard with planning for places of worship and in any case it has not produce any results yet. Moreover, although the notion of “social cohesion” is present in the document, there is not a specific guidance to the planning authorities about how to improve the community services and the social infrastructure. The plan is more based on maps about the land-use of Athens and the role of different stakeholders is not clear. Furthermore, even though it recognises that different groups have particular needs, it does not provide specific instruments in order for policy-makers to meet these demands. However, it represents in a more abstract way the willingness of the state to form policies in a strategic level towards social cohesion. This provides the basis on which more inclusive and integrated policies could be built on.

Planning in UK

Problem statement

Islam is the second largest faith in London after Christianity and its Muslim population is one of the largest in any European city. According to the 2001 Census, 607.000 people living in London identified themselves as Muslims while this number represents the 8.5 per cent of London's population (Greater London Authority, 2006). Moreover, the boroughs with the highest proportions of Muslims in UK are all London boroughs (Greater London Authority, 2006). The need for the partnership between the Muslim community and policy makers at national, regional and local level in order to establish ways of their representation in the wider society is identified in policy papers from the Mayor of London. In his report in 2006 he recognizes that :

“Muslim community organisations and mosques need to be supported in terms of funding, training and other resources to enable them to promote participation that is representative and inclusive of all sections of Muslim communities. The potential of mosques as hubs of service delivery should be explored and developed”

As argued from scholars, in order to increase participation by ethnic minorities, the British planning system has made combined efforts since the 1980s (Thomas, 2000). In spite these attempts, however, the range of participation is reducing (Baker et al., 2010). As Janssen-Jansen, L.B and Woltjer, J. (2009) argue, the keystone of the planning system in UK is regulating development and land use for the public interest. The notion of “development” relates with a change in land-use or buildings and with the “planning permission”. As Nye (1998) also argues, one of the principles behind British planning laws is that the mere right of the ownership of land is to maintain its established function. All development whether it is a new building or a change of an existing building or the change of use of land requires preliminary approval from the local authority. The planning permission for any change in land-use it is not only one of the

key elements in British planning but rather the basis for the whole planning system (EU Compendium of spatial planning systems and policies: United kingdom) and planning control depends on the definition of development. Development is defined as “the carrying-out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land” (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1997). This definition in practice forms two areas ; the operational development and the change of use. For each of these areas there are various stages in the legislation with different rules (EU Compendium of spatial planning systems and policies: United kingdom).

The supervision and control in the planning system as well as the publication of national and regional guidance is the responsibility of the government (EU Compendium of spatial planning systems and policies: United kingdom). Local authorities regulate development and compose local planning instruments. In this context and within the current legislative framework, faith groups wanting to establish a place of worship are looking on two options : either they can select a building that already exists as a place of worship and in this way not having the obligation to apply for planning permission or they can adapt or purpose-build another building having to apply for a planning permission (Nye, 1998).

As Gale and Naylor (2002) argue the government’s intention as it appears through different provisions is to avoid the discrimination against “racial” or ethnic minorities in the planning practice. However, as Gale and Naylor further state even though since 1986 in the Housing and Planning Act it is clearly stated that “ It is unlawful for a planning authority to discriminate against a person in carrying out their planning functions” these arrangements are rather general (2002) and, in practice, it is not clear how the planning regulations can respond to cultural differences. Furthermore although these practices intend to prevent discrimination against different “racial” groups, they do not include measures against religious discrimination (Gale and Naylor, 2002). Therefore, they further state that “planning laws and regulations per

se are largely blind to differences of culture and religion” (Gale and Naylor, 2002). Nevertheless during the last 10 years there been initiatives and planning policies which recognize the growing needs of faith groups and put the places of worship in the general cluster of “social infrastructure”.

Planning in London

This chapter aims to answer the fifth sub-questions by presenting the current situation in London in regard with the policies for official worship places. It introduces the institutional context and it shows what actions have been taken in order to deal with the increasing needs of faith communities. Moreover, it presents the London Plan 2011 as the main governmental planning strategy for social cohesion in London and the Supplementary Planning Guidance to the London Plan as a more detailed document in regard with the needs of faith groups. Although there is not a specific program about places of worship, there is a typology in the strategic framework and in supplementary documents that suggests the importance of addressing the needs of faith groups.

Institutional arrangements and policies

In order to examine the specific policies about places of worship, a brief presentation of the UK planning system is relevant. In UK there is a hierarchical structure of planning and thus it occurs at three different levels as presented below (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005) :

- **National level :**

- The legal framework and the specific laws in regard with planning are set by the Parliament. The establishment of the national planning policies and the specific

rules which dictate how the system functions are the responsibility of the government. These specific policies are stated in Planning Policy Statements (PPS) and Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG).

- **Regional level :**

At this level, Regional Planning Bodies (in London, the Mayor) are liable for preparing and producing the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) (in London, the Spatial Development Strategy) according to the needs for development in the specific areas. Moreover, the RSS should be in accordance with the policies that are outlined at the national level.

- **Local level :**

Local planning authorities (other than county councils) prepare a Local Development Framework (LDF); a series of documents which put out the planning strategy for the area. These documents provide the planning strategy for the particular area in general accordance with the Mayor's London Plan. The LDF's include Local Development Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents which are additive to the development plan documents.

National Planning Policy Framework

In March 2012, the government issued the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The document replaced the Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Statements issued since 1991 and it gives instructions for local planning authorities in formulating plans. The document recognizes the importance of planning in regard with sustainable development and states that "the purpose of planning is to achieve sustainable development". Moreover, it admits that in some cases planning has inclined to exclude communities by imposing aims or making decisions without engage them in the relevant procedures.

The definition of sustainable development in this policy framework includes the provision of accessible local services in accordance with the community's needs as well as the support for the cultural and social well-being (National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2012). It recognizes three dimensions to sustainable development; economic, social and environmental and within this framework it states the functions that planning should have as below :

- **“Economic** : contributing in building a strong, responsive and competitive economy ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure
- **Social** : supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being
- **Environmental** : contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimize waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy” (National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2012)

The document goes further and suggests that planning decisions should support places which encourage the engagement between members of the community and it recommends that planning decisions, in order to improve the sustainability of communities, should be positively for the arrangement of community facilities such as places of worship. These suggestions become more clear in the Regional and Local level policies.

Regional Planning policies

The London Plan

At the regional level and especially for London, strategic planning is the responsibility of the Mayor, the London Boroughs and the Corporation of the City of London. According to the relevant legislation, the Greater London Authority Act of 1999, the Mayor produce the Spatial Development Strategy for the city known as “The London Plan”. The general objectives as well as the specific process are in accordance with the Greater London Authority Act of 1999 and the National Policy Framework. Moreover, boroughs' development documents have to be in all congruity with it (London plan : Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London 2011). The London Plan is revised periodically to ensure that it is as up-to-date as possible in regard to the government guidance and the national legislation .

In July of 2011, the Mayor of London issued the London Plan 2011 after the integration of the sustainability considerations to the initial London Plan of 2004. As stated in the document : *“The London Plan is the overall strategic plan for London setting out an integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of London over the next 20-25 years”*. It is the general framework for the development and land-use in London and takes account of three main themes; economic development and wealth creation, social development and improvement of the environment. The London Plan sets the strategic framework in which boroughs should set detailed local planning policies and it is considered as an important part for the accomplishment of a healthy economy, sustainable development and a more inclusive society in London (London plan : Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London 2011).

In accordance with the three main themes above, the leading strategies for London are presented in regard with transport, economic development, housing, culture, social issues and environmental issues. The plan gives more details and highlights the particular regard to the policies about establishing needs such as health inequalities, housing, social infrastructure,

education, inclusive environments and opportunities for all. The term of “social infrastructure” covers an extensive group of facilities such as schools, universities, sport and recreation facilities as well as places of worship and it is considered to play an important role in supporting London’s growth and in making areas more sustainable. Therefore planning for social infrastructure in particular within new development and regeneration areas is considered to be essential. The plan includes a distinct and detailed policy, the “Protection and enhancement of social infrastructure” which has the strategic objective of the provision of an increasing social infrastructure to cope with the needs of London’s growing and diverse population (London plan : Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London 2011).

Moreover, the document outlines specific policies in order to enable the planning system to help in the deliverance of equal life chances by supporting social infrastructure provision, reducing health inequalities and creating sustainable neighbourhoods (London plan : Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London 2011) and it views these issues as paramount in order to meet the challenges of a growing and diverse population. Within the specific policy “Ensuring equal life chances for all”, London Plan acknowledge the needs of particular communities such as faith groups and considers that it is important to address these needs through interconnected action. The plan concedes that there is an issue of inequality across London and in regard with planning decisions it advises that any development proposals should protect facilities that meet the needs of faith groups whilst proposals that involve loss of these facilities without sufficient mitigation or arrangement for reinstatement should be prevented (London plan : Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London 2011). Furthermore it states that for the preparation of the Local Development Documents (DPD), local groups and communities should be included in order to identify their needs and make the proper arrangements for them.

The document also notes that there is a need to plan for the whole range of social infrastructure London's communities and neighbourhoods to support a high and improving quality of life. Especially, in regard with places of worship the plan suggests that boroughs could identify clusters of specific groups and examine whether proper arrangements should be made in order to meet their needs. In addition, it states that multi denomination places of worship which could also function as wider community facilities, especially as part of regeneration projects should be encouraged (London plan : Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London 2011).

The Supplementary Planning Guidance to the London Plan

In accordance with the London Plan 2004, another policy tool was issued in 2007, the "Planning for equality and diversity in London - Supplementary Planning Guidance to the London Plan" (SPG), which now accompanies the London Plan 2011. This supplementary guidance provides instructions for the application of the main policies of London Plan in a more thorough manner in regard with meeting the needs of London's different communities. As stated in the SPG the main objective of the document was "to ensure that implementation of the London Plan achieves the Mayor's vision" (SPG, 2007).

In the SPG, faith groups are recognised as "target equality groups who may face discrimination and exclusion" (SPG, 2007). In the section "Planning for equality", the SPG inspect, in a more particular way, the main spatial issues that different London's groups face. It proposes that by considering the different needs of these target equality groups, the planning system can help to reduce the unjust treatment and exclusion that many people continue to experience (SPG, 2007). Moreover, the SVG acknowledge that multi-faith communities should be recognized in the policies which aim to promote diversity.

In addition, the SPG endorse the fact that it is of great importance to support the understanding between different faith groups in order to implement community cohesion strategies (SPG, 2007) and in the point "Supporting places of worship" it provides specific instructions for the

boroughs about places of worship. It suggests that :

- Where they already exist they should be preserved as a significant part of the local community needs
- New worship places should be treated as part of new developments which encourage community cohesion
- Where they are in decline, faith groups should be supported to examine converting them to multi-denomination in order to preserve these facilities
- New multi-denomination places of worship should be considered as part of new developments which encourage community cohesion and serve as wider facilities (SPG, 2007)

Furthermore, the SPG acknowledge the fact that some faith groups which need large places to accommodate all their worshipers are facing difficulties in finding suitable sites and therefore it gives also more technical instructions. For instance, it proposes that in identifying these suitable locations a principal factor should be the access to public transport for the members of the faith group in order to minimize the impacts of transport congestion in the particular area.

Local Planning policies; Local Development Frameworks

The London plan identifies the responsibility of boroughs to work with communities through local partnerships and organizations for the identification of those which have the most considerable needs in a particular area and the instruments by which they can be met (London plan : Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London 2011). In addition, it considers boroughs and strategic partnerships as the actors with the key role in engaging the different parts of public, community and private sectors in order to deal with great importance issues such as community safety, health, transport and housing infrastructure and access to social activities through local strategies and policy tools (London plan : Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London 2011). Moreover, the plan propose that a program for social infrastructure

could be included in the Local Development Frameworks (LDF).

Another policy in London Plan, the “ Building London’s Neighbourhoods and Communities”, also suggests that development should be designed to improve people’s access to social and community infrastructure. In accordance with the SPG, development plans which include social infrastructure should be supported based on local needs assessments. Thus, proposals which result in the loss of existing social infrastructure without at the same time providing realistic alternatives should not be accepted. Moreover facilities should be accessible to everyone in the community and be located within easy reach and when possible the multiple use of premises should be encouraged (London plan : Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London 2011).

According to the London plan, LDFs should specify the framework for the collaborative engagement with social infrastructure providers and communities not only for the regular estimation of the need for social infrastructure at the local and sub-regional level but also to secure sites for a potential reorganization or future development. Each LDF provides the framework for the collaborative engagement with organisations of the community and providers of social infrastructure and in particular it frames, at the local and sub-regional level, the systematic assessment of the needs for social infrastructure and the protection of spaces for future provision (London plan : Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London 2011). Thus, while the London Plan provides wider policies for London, the LDFs provide more local and detailed policies within the borough in order to achieve the council's vision of the development in the area.

Results of the planning efforts

By making an analysis of the policies that were presented above, based on evaluation documents from consultants and reviews I examine the results of these policies so far. However,

this evaluation is more indicative as the policies that are presented in the London Plan 2011 are relatively new. Moreover, even though the importance of planning for worship places is identified by the relevant policies of sustainability and cohesion the results of these policies are somewhat still vague.

The problems that UK planning system is facing in regard with places of worship are declared even in the policy instruments themselves. In particular in the “Planning for equality and diversity in London - Supplementary Planning Guidance to the London Plan” it is stated that : *“The definition of 'places of worship' in the UK planning system is based on an old fashioned Church of England model of provision, and often does not adequately reflect the wider needs of faith groups and the very different patterns of worship that are beginning to crop up”*.

As far as the London Plan of 2011 is concerned there is not yet an assessment of the specific policy in regard with places of worship as the time frame is relatively small. However, a research that was conducted in 2008 which evaluated the existing policies at the time such as the London Plan 2004 and the SGP 2007 can be useful in understanding the main implications in the UK planning system and the results of the particular policies so far. In general, planning and faith in London are framed in the broader policy concept of sustainable development. Since 1999 that a strategy was issued under the name “A better quality of life: a strategy for sustainable development in the United Kingdom”, sustainable development is considered to be the keystone of the planning system. (A better quality of life: a strategy for sustainable development in the United Kingdom, 1999). Moreover, the National Framework of 2012 identifies one of the four pillars of sustainable development the “social progress which recognises the needs of everyone” (National Framework 2012).

However, one of the main findings about the results of these planning practices so far is that “there is a noticeable absence of specific guidance how the planning system should meet the needs of different faith communities” (Responding to the needs of faith communities: places of

worship, 2008). Furthermore, the survey shows that even though there are explicit planning policies such as the SPG, the London planning authorities are not fully aware of them and for boroughs it remains uncertain how to identify the needs of faith groups (Responding to the needs of faith communities: places of worship, 2008).

In regard with assessments of need for new provision, most of the boroughs did not use any qualitative or quantitative appraisal for the needs of faith groups before developing any policy or even before determining specific applications for places of worships. In most of the cases that was due to the absence of an obligatory requirement as well as due to the lack of data. However, there have been also some cases that an assessment was conducted through consultation with faith groups or on case-by-case basis (Responding to the needs of faith communities: places of worship, 2008).

Therefore, planning applications are considered from a scope of general community facilities while for example housing uses are based on needs assessment. In addition, according to planning officers there is an unclear situation about whom to consult as very few boroughs have up-to-date databases. Furthermore, for the majority of the boroughs there are no additional consultation arrangements with faith communities beyond these which are statutory (Responding to the needs of faith communities: places of worship, 2008). Another important result of the research was that faith communities need more support in regard with the consideration of their needs for worship places from councils and the government. A better understanding of the role of faith groups in the society, an increasing faith literacy training of local and government officials and a more plan led policy approach to worship place provision are some of the conclusions of the interviewees from faith communities.

Due to the operation of the planning system a lot of faith groups face significant difficulties in establishing worship places. The research shows a limited communication between planners

and faith groups and a lack of understanding in regard with future but also current development needs. These findings agree with the results of another research which was conducted in 2004 (Planning and Diversity: Research into Policies and Procedures, March 2004, Sheffield Hallam University, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) in order to review the existing planning policies to ensure that they are sensitive to the needs of a diverse society (Research 2004) . The research examined the efficiency of national planning policies in regard with meeting the needs of different groups of society and its findings displayed that “about a quarter of local planning authorities never consult with faith groups when preparing development plans” (Planning and Diversity: Research into Policies and Procedures, 2004).

Conclusion

In general, both the London Plan and the SPG deal with the social cohesion agenda in regard with places of worship. While the first does it in a more general way by recognizing the link between planning for worship places and social cohesion, the latter gives specific instructions for the planning authorities in order to deal with the growing needs of faith groups. However, the findings of the evaluation of this general strategy so far imply that there is a difficulty of the UK planning system to respond to the needs of faith communities for places of worship. Even though there are policies that could facilitate the decision-making process they do not seem to be taken into consideration by planners or politicians. Therefore, there is a necessity for a specific policy framework in order to address the needs of faith communities and in the same time, an actual shift towards a more proactive planning system. Moreover, the UK planning system treats places of worship similar to other community developments without taking into account the role of religion in the wider society. With its inflexibility in the change of land and building-use, creates problems instead of solving them. This inflexibility does not exist only due to legislation but also because of the fact that the UK planning system, in a great degree, is political oriented.

Lesson drawing for Athens and suggestions for London

In this chapter the last sub-question is answered in regard with the lesson drawing. According to Rose the first step is about the identification of the problem in the home country. This has been elaborated in the second chapter . The second step involves the selection of the country that the lesson will be drawn from and it has been taken by choosing UK for this research. The third step that involves the inspection of how the program works there on the ground could be more concrete if this research would be conducted in UK and through a longer period of time. However, the findings from UK provide a reliable ground for the research.

By taking the fourth step that is described by Rose (2002) an abstract lesson- drawing model which identifies the cause and effect relationships and moreover includes the necessary elements that make the program work is needed. This model is the Supplementary Planning Guidance even though it does not represent an obligatory program, it includes the typology that allows to the local authorities to identify the needs of faith groups for places of worship and gives specific directions.

Next step is about designing the lesson determined by whether the lesson is an adaptation, a synthesis of models or an hybrid, or an inspiration by learning. In Athens case as the institutional context is much different than London the policies mentioned in the SPG could provide the inspiration for the government in Greece to establish an agenda that recognizes the importance of planning for worship places. In particular the Strategic Plan for Athens 2021 could be accompanied by a detailed guide where directions are given about the implementation of worship places. The sixth step involves the desirability of the lesson for the home country. This is not decided based only in technical details but mostly it is in the judgment of elected officials and political parties. In Athens' case the administrative authority

would be the Ministry of the Environment, energy and Climate Change supported by the government and political parties.

Seven and eighth step is about the lesson's actual use and the judgment about whether the program could operate to the home country by examining constraints and resource requirements as well as identify institutional parameters and the national context. The main limitation is the pathogenesis of the Greece's planning system. Usually there are not long-term strategies and policies and even when they exist they seem to be ignored even by the government. By issuing laws ad hoc, a lot of times these policies are bypassed and treated such as if they don't even exist as presented above in the case of the central mosque of Athens. However, the Strategic Plan for Athens is considered as a framework towards a more holistic view for the development of the capital of the country and if this document was accompanied by specific directions and rules it could be more effective. Another limitation would be the cultural context of Athens. Even though there have been steps from the government in the form of laws which point out clearly that the Greek Church is not involved to the planning of worship places for the religious minorities we must not forget that it is considered an important actor at least at the level of the discourse about the establishment of worship places.

However, an explicit mention of places of worship in policy documents could help local authorities and planners. Moreover, an institutional engagement with representatives of faith groups could facilitate this process. Even though the UK planning system treats places of worship under the more general notion of "social infrastructure" we must not forget that in the same time it identifies faith communities as target groups for the policies of social cohesion and this could apply in the Greek context too.

Discussion and conclusion

Summary

The main objective of this research is to understand how planning policies for worship places operate in UK and especially in London and examine if London can provide lessons that could be relevant in the Greek context.

In order to do that the questions that were answered are :

- What is the theoretical link between social cohesion and planning for worship places?

Even though there is not a clear framework that links planning for worship places and social cohesion, in the scientific literature there is a discussion about the importance of addressing the needs of different faith communities in regard with worship places. Planning can facilitate the process of the integration of religious minorities in the wider society by recognizing the role of faith in the public sphere.

- What are the main characteristics of planning for worship places in Athens so far?

The planning practice in the country is linked directly with the epistemology of rational planning and its technocratic approach. In regard with places of worship there is an absence of even basic elements of communicative planning that would help to form processes where the Muslim minority could participate. Furthermore, there is no provision in planning policies specifically for worship places. Most of the important issues are not framed in long-term policies and even when they are, there is nothing to guarantee that this policies will be implemented.

- What are the effects of the existence of unofficial worship places to social cohesion?

Planning for mosques is not included into urban planning programs as their religious meaning is underscored and they are treated as a “problem”. The case study of the central mosque in Athens demonstrates the insufficiency of the current planning system to deal with the needs of the Muslim minority and reveals the path which lead to the establishment of hundreds of unofficial places of worship in the city. These places although they act unifying for the Muslims, in the same time they separate them from the wider society and thus they become places of conflict while, in practice, they result to a standard social exclusion of the Muslim community. Moreover, the case study illustrates the absence of representatives of Muslims in the planning process so far and the need to a more communicative shift in Greek planning.

- Which are the new planning instruments in Athens in regard with social cohesion and places of worship ?

Although in the main planning instrument for social cohesion, the Strategic Plan for Athens, it is stated that one of its aims is the “cohesive city” it is still not clear how this can be pursued in practice. Besides the general problems of the Greek planning system such as the chaotic legislation and the ad hoc oriented consideration of important issues, there is not a clear guidance to the local planning authorities about how to improve social infrastructure and especially places of worship for the growing Muslim community.

- What are the planning efforts in London in regard with places of worship and what are the results of these efforts so far?

Both the London Plan and the Supplementary Planning Guidance recognize the importance of planning for worship places as a factor for social cohesion. However, even though they provide general instructions for the local administration in regard with planning for different faith

groups, the difficulties of the UK planning system are still present. There are issues of communication between planners and faith groups and even though there are policies that could facilitate the decision-making process they do not seem to be taken into consideration by planners or politicians. Moreover, the UK planning system treats places of worship similar to other community developments without taking into account the role of religion in the wider society. Therefore, there is a necessity for a specific policy framework in order to address the needs of faith communities and in the same time, an actual shift towards a more proactive planning system.

- How can Athens draw lessons from London?

The way in which Athens can learn from London is lesson drawing. London could provide the inspiration for the government in Greece to establish an agenda that recognizes the importance of planning for worship places. In particular the Strategic Plan for Athens 2021 could be accompanied by a detailed guide where directions are given about the implementation of worship places. We must not forget the contextual differences of these two cities so it could be useful firstly to choose the lesson of developing a typology for worship places within the planning instruments.

Suggestions for theory

Following the conclusions of this research there are points regarding suggestions on theories and policies.

On theory, the concept of social cohesion and its link with planning policies in regard with places of worship seems to lack a framework that could connect these two topics more clear. Such a framework would help further research and could make decision-making more effective and useful. Although there are scholars who examine the issue of planning for the needs of different faith groups and there is a discussion about policies that could address them, this

discussion is made in more practical terms such as land-use and planning permits. The notion of “race blind” planning is there but in the contemporary multi-faith and diverse cities maybe it is time to explore more how planning can be less “faith blind”.

In regard with lesson drawing as it is more practical and provides explicit steps that could be taken in order to adjust the policies of one country in relation with another, suggestions about how this could work better can be made . In London, the Supplementary Planning Guidance gives directions to the local authorities of how to adjust their policies in the general framework of social cohesion. It is not a document that it is vague but rather it gives specific guidance for the boroughs when they deal with applications for places of worship. For Athens context, however, the lesson is to focus on addressing the needs of different faith groups and prevent their exclusion of the public sphere. The shift to a more proactive way of planning for these faith groups could help in their integration to the wider society and prevent them from the feeling that are second-class citizens. Having said that, we should recognise the different contextual and institutional arrangements in Greece and suggest that a first step could be to form a typology for official worship places in the relevant policy documents which could help planning authorities to understand better the multi-faith context of Athens.

Suggestions for policy

It would be over- optimistic and even naïve to think that by comprehending the UK’s example, there could be a shift towards a more proactive way for introducing and implement policies in Greece. However, this research presents a perception of how policies in regard with the needs of different faith groups occur in a different institutional and cultural context. Further research could provide valuable lessons for policy makers and planners in Greece and could also show the institutional limitations for policy transfer and the ways by which they could overcome these limitations.

However, the starting point could be that policy makers in Greece should first acknowledge that when forming policies they should consider the different faith groups that exist in the country. In Athens context the multi-faith society is not a legal or vague term but a reality that will not go away. The government should encourage local authorities to include planning for places of worship in their policies and support their engagement with the faith groups in this process. As a part of the strategy for the integration of Muslims it is important to strengthen the dialogue with their organizations. The lack of the participation of Muslims in the planning process for worship places is striking. The legislation and the new planning instruments claim to aim to the integration of different social groups but in practice they prohibit this because, in essence, they insist on not providing any specific directions in regard with the engagement of faith groups in planning for worship places. The state should form policies which insure a distinct role for the Muslim community in planning for worship places and give specific guidance for the local authorities.

Study limitations and further research

The document based methodology is the main weakness of this research. Moreover, there is not enough evidence based in implemented projects that have as a starting point the London Plan and the Supplementary Planning Guidance. Further research and contact with policy makers and representatives of faith groups could provide more sufficient evidence of how the strategies that are pointed out in the London Plan and the SPG have helped or not on addressing of the needs of Muslims for official worship places.

Secondary data helped to understand how these policies worked so far in the UK context. However, by examining them there is always the problem of subjectivity. The second point is that the sources used for evaluating the planning efforts in London might not be of academic standards or peer reviewed and scientific sources on the subject would support more the analysis.

Another point is that in Athens case the sources that were analyzed in regard with the Muslim community and the tensions that arise due to the unofficial worship places were not carried out by a research academic body. More scientific data would aid the analysis. The limitation of this research also lies to the issue of time and necessitate the conduction of further research in regard with these policies and their evaluation in practice. The contextual characteristics of the two countries are very different and as this research presents the strategic frameworks for their capitals, it does not include these characteristics explicitly.

Further research that focus on the assessment of the policies that are described in both the London Plan and the SPG, could provide more clear suggestions for the context of Athens. Furthermore, for Athens case research in regard with the problems and the obstacles that the Strategic Plan for Athens may pose to faith groups could be helpful in order to see how people evaluate in practice the policies of the plan.

Moreover, it would be interesting to examine if and to what extent the Strategic Plan for Athens will be implemented in regard with its key concept of social cohesion. Is this concept a figure of speech in the Plan or it will produce results in the wider society? Since this plan is the first strategic planning initiative in the last thirty years and having in mind the difficulties of the planning system and practice in Greece, would it be able to fulfill its purpose?

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