

2013

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Organizing public space as a framework for re-thinking the city: Pafos's bid for the 2017 European Capital of Culture

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Abstract

As the main theme of Pafos's bid to become the 2017 European Capital of Culture, the Pafos 2017 Working Group developed the idea of the "Open-Air Factory" as a framework that would host the city's cultural activities in 2017, but also as a tool for redefining the identity of Pafos from a provincial tourist resort to a multi-cultural hub of civic cohesion and creative innovation. The projects included in the bid aim to create a series of interlocking public spaces in Pafos's loosely-knit urban fabric, as an attempt to *weave* the city and its citizens back together. The paper presents the process of shaping the spatial component of the Open-Air Factory concept and discusses the ideas underlying some of the bid's cornerstone proposals, as tools for examining issues of centrality in the context of a dispersed city and culture as an instrumental agent in shaping urban futures.

Keywords: European Capital of Culture 2017; public spaces; urban integration; sprawl; sustainability.

1. INTRODUCTION

"We know we are small: a small city in a small district in one of the smallest countries of the European Union. Yet we aim high. ... We strongly believe that culture can bring about social transformation and urban regeneration. We are seeking to become European Capital of Culture in order to introduce culture and initiate change in the heart of a wider area that has been yearning for it. Pafos and its district are small enough to apply ground-breaking ideas and implement innovative pilot projects that have a direct impact, but it's also large enough to bear interesting results; the ECoC process potentially establishes a cultural policy that encompasses urban, suburban and rural areas to share and further co-develop alongside similar areas in Cyprus and abroad."¹

This excerpt from Pafos's Bid Book (Phase 1 of the bidding process) very succinctly maps Pafos's position as a contender for the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) in 2017. It admits it has problems, but it acknowledges its desire to address them. It is looking at the ECoC designation as a catalyst for the solution process. It believes that culture can provide such a forum for both social transformation and urban regeneration. It knows that change cannot occur in only a small urban center, but it needs to include a wider periphery of varying densities. It may be small, but it is confident that its scale can help it work as a paradigm, as a case study. Pafos has the will, the vision, and the know-how; all it needs is the momentum. And it is asking Europe to provide it.

¹ Pafos 2017 Working Group, 2011, pp. 46-47.

1.1. European Capitals of Culture- history, procedures, financial profile and objectives

Since its inception in 1983 by Melina Mercouri and Jacques Lang, then Ministers of Culture in Greece and France respectively, the selection process for a European Capital of Culture has undergone a series of refinements. Until 2004, the Council of Ministers designated one for each year, with the exception of 2000; the millennium year was celebrated with nine European Cities of Culture. Yet a year earlier, in 1999, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union decided to set up a new selection process for the 2005-2012 titles, changing the title to European *Capital* of Culture and Member States taking their turn as hosts and proposing a city. An international panel of experts assessed the cities nominated based on various criteria, including cultural cooperation with other European countries. As of 2006, and for the 2013-2019 titles, the process has become more rigorous, as cities within the Member States designated as the year's hosts compete with one another on the bases of theme, program, citizen involvement, long-term expectations and the European dimension of their proposal. A selection panel of experts coming from European and Member State institutions evaluates each candidate in two phases, making suggestions and closely following subsequent proposal amendments. Once a city is selected, an advisory panel closely monitors its preparations for the year of the events before eventually awarding the city with the Melina Mercouri Prize of €1.5 million; the award is only given if the city has honored its initial commitments.

This short historical account demonstrates the increasing emphasis placed on an institution that began as a platform for celebrating European cultures and developed into an opportunity to directly affect a city's development strategy, image and visibility. Considerable energy and funds are dedicated by the candidate cities just on the bidding process, which begins six years before the year of ECoC designation (for the Cyprus ECoC 2017, the process began in December 2010). What must be made clear, especially in times of economic hardship such as these, is that the winner does not receive a substantial financial gain from the designation directly; according to the Palmer report (2004), the proportion of EU funding as part of the total public funding generated for all ECoC cities between 1995-2004 was 1,53%. And just to put this perspective, for the period 1995-2004 studied by the Palmer report, the total expenditure that can be directly or indirectly connected with all ECoC cities exceeds the amount of €3 billion (and includes operational and capital costs, as well as expenses undertaken directly by public or private organizations)².

Obviously, any city that becomes an ECoC will see considerable funds invested on its physical space; again between 1995 and 2004 these ranged from 10 to over 220 million €, coming from municipal, regional, national and EU sources or private sponsorship (which represented about 13% of all generated income)³. But not all cities had the same objectives for the event. Most of them expected to improve their international image, attract visitors and boost civic pride. Other targets were the improvement of local cultural infrastructure and the development of local talent, the widening of local audiences and the advancement of inter-European relationships⁴. For some cities, the ECoC was a year-long event, but for others, it meant the beginning of a process⁵.

1.2. Culture and urban regeneration

Even in the early years, it was realized that ECoC could have a lasting effect in a city's development strategy and physical space; Glasgow 1990 was a case in point, demonstrating ECoC's potential for urban regeneration. Glasgow was the first European *City* of Culture (as was the original title) that was not a traditional cultural center (like Athens, Florence, Amsterdam, West Berlin and Paris that had preceded it), and the first to regard the title not as a celebration of accomplishment but as a facilitator of change. It therefore broadened the definition of culture to

² Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004, pp. 19-22.

³ Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004, p. 19.

⁴ Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004, p. 14.

⁵ Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004, p. 17.

embrace elements of the local identity, such as shipbuilding and architecture; it distributed activities both within and outside the city center; it involved international and established names together with emerging locals and grassroots groups; and it funded permanent infrastructure as well as ephemeral activities, managing to reach wider audiences and stimulate growth on the cultural, the spatial, and the economic fronts⁶.

A great number of papers, reports, articles and books investigate the links between cultural investment and urban economies and growth⁷. Cultural policy, on an urban level, is no longer seen simply as a tool for community enhancement and social cohesion, but as a marketable commodity, a mechanism for economic advancement. Cities put *events* on the forefront of their development strategies, repositioning the past emphasis on built heritage as a “place-making” tool. Events can be spectacular and create a lasting impression for the city, they can enhance the identity of a particular place or an entire area, they create a need for presence and participation, and, as they are generally less expensive than a permanent physical structure, more cost-effective as a city marketing device⁸. Events can also draw a dominant narrative to bring together an area’s spatial, creative, economic and governance resources for a common end –namely, the event itself, as in the case of an ECoC.

It is however, misleading to create the image of a concordant course among cultural policy decisions, urban regeneration and economic results, as most studies discuss the eventual precedence that economic development takes over hard-to-assess cultural outcomes⁹. A balance is hard to strike, as attentions oscillate between developing the city center and its periphery, between the production and the consumption of culture, and between investing on temporary activities and permanent infrastructures; what Bianchini identifies as the ‘spatial dilemma’, the ‘economic development dilemma’ and the ‘cultural funding dilemma’ respectively¹⁰. ‘Cultural planning’ has emerged as alternative to conventional policies that regard culture either as an aesthetic pursuit or a regeneration tool (which may lead to undesirable gentrification). Cultural planning adopts a more holistic approach to inclusive definitions of culture as a way of life and of space as a territory of diverse qualities and activities; it is regarded as a community-building instrument with inherent value when it comes to urban regeneration¹¹. ‘Time planning’ is another field that investigates issues of temporal cycles (e.g. work and leisure, time spent at home and outside, movement and stasis, gender relationships) and their imprint on spatial planning. Planners place increasing emphasis on a synergy between cultural and time planning in order to form new tactics for strategic planning, considering culture and time as resources instead of limitations¹².

It is now time to return to the specifics of the Pafos bid, which, while being shaped, was marginally aware of the aforementioned scholarship. Yet all these issues arose as Pafos began to build its scheme for the ECoC event; the need to place importance on both the urban center and its periphery, to achieve a balance between permanent and temporary infrastructure, to support the production of culture while spreading consumption and participation to a diverse audience, to strategically place flagship projects as integral shots of activities in ailing areas, to add new directions to current tourism policies, to create a strong image for the entire district of Pafos. Pafos began with a critical self-assessment in order to choose which features would be put forth as either advantages or obstacles to overcome.

⁶ García, 2004, p. 319.

⁷ The bibliography at the end of the paper includes a small sample of the ever-expanding literature on the subject.

⁸ Richards & Palmer, 2010.

⁹ García, 2004, p. 324.

¹⁰ Bianchini (1993, pp. 201–204), as quoted in García, 2004, p. 314.

¹¹ See Bianchini, 1993, Florida, 2002 and Mercer, 2006.

¹² Deffner and Liambrianidis, 2005, pp. 243-244, p. 256.

2. PAFOS - A PRELIMINARY READING

“Thirty-seven years ago our country experienced a devastating tragedy. Since then, Pafos has undergone a major transformation from a provincial town into a popular tourist destination, but it has not succeeded in mending the spatial, social and emotional gaps left behind by its relocated citizens. The influx of immigrants and tourists in the recent years and the ensuing unplanned growth, have aggravated the city’s problems, creating a loose urban tissue and a tattered social fabric that need to be weaved back together again; away from single-minded ideas and nationalist sensibilities, culture can become the yarn and the title of European capital of Culture can be the loom that will turn the rag back into a rich tapestry, part of the embroidery of a united Europe.”¹³

Pafos developed a clear bidding strategy with a strong, if somewhat ambitious, concept. We acknowledged and studied our problems, and decided to turn them on their head and combine them with our best features in order to tackle them. We regarded the ECoC opportunity as a much-needed catalyst for change, not simply as a year-long cultural event that the city could successfully pull through.

The ECoC bid was a chance for Pafos to re-assess its current state and its plans for future development. The city of Pafos is the administrative and financial centre of the District of Pafos, which comprises an area of 1.393 km² (approx. the surface area of the city of Rome), with four Municipalities (Pafos, Geroskipou, Pegeia and Polis Chrysochous) and 98 village communities. Out of 89.000 residents, about 30.000 (30% of the population) is non-Cypriot: British, Russian, Greek, Romanian, Bulgarian, Scandinavian. And, each year, about 700.000 tourists are added to them. The numbers clearly show two characteristics of Pafos that make it stand out in relationship to other European Capitals of Culture:

- It is one of the smallest cities to ever claim the title. It therefore does not have large-scale cultural infrastructure (Theater and Opera complexes, large concert halls etc.), as they would make no sense; and there is also little sense in building them for 2017 as they would probably be underused in the years to follow.
- Past European Capitals of Culture have relied on their designation to become better known-abroad and more attractive to tourists; Pafos is already a well-known tourist destination. As a European Capital of Culture, Pafos aims to transform itself into a cultural destination, and not only for the sake of the visitors; Pafos is first and foremost addressing its residents and inviting them to re-engage with the city.

Pafos developed as a tourist destination after the 1974 events, when the main tourist areas of the north were severed from the rest of the island. With no overall strategy or planning, Pafos District was lucky to still have many natural areas left intact, as well as villages that maintain their traditional character. Yet tourism, although an economic necessity, is straining the sensitive environmental and social balance of the area.

The pressures are very evident in the spatial fabric of the city itself, which is separated in two parts: Ano Pafos or Ktima, the upper city on the hill, and Kato Pafos, the lower city at the coast.

Kato Pafos is the main tourist hub of the district. It is characterized by the large hotel complexes that create an almost continuous wall, disconnecting the city from its most prized feature: the water. It is also mostly addressed to tourists and avoided by locals who, as a result, have minimal contact

¹³ Pafos 2017 Working Group, 2011, p. 47.

with them. Because this is where most of the jobs in the tourist sector are located, it is also here that most immigrant neighborhoods have sprung up. Yet it is also home to Nea Pafos, an extensive archaeological area designated a UNESCO World-Heritage Site, which is sadly broken apart, hidden by shop fronts and neglected.

Ktima, on the other hand, is the administrative and commercial core of the city, with its share of historically and architecturally significant buildings. However, it lacks the feeling of a busy urban center; it has low building densities and a dearth of open public spaces which are public only nominally, since, in reality, they are taken over by cars or left empty and unkempt. It seems to be a relic of the British colonialism, when the existence of public spaces for social gatherings and exchange of ideas meant potential nuclei of dissention, so they were naturally discouraged. Another peculiarity in Pafos, possibly all over Cyprus, but certainly clearly evident in Ktima, is the strong presence of an absence: a large percentage of the land and building stock in Ktima, including the entire neighborhood of Mouttalos, is the property of dislocated Turkish-Cypriot Pafians, and now remains empty and in a bad state of repair. “Holes” such as these are spread all over the entire area of Pafos which is even now developing in a haphazard fashion, as a loose urban tissue with small nuclei connected by cars and large, undefined gaps between them.

The division between Kato Pafos and Ktima represents, in a sense, the entire range of divisions that plague us: divisions between people, within the city, and in the island. As a candidate city for the European Capital of Culture in 2017, this was the greatest challenge for Pafos; to transform an arena of differences into a field of synthesis on three successive levels: the social make-up of the district, the wounds left by the island’s violent dissection, and the persistence of local cultural identity within the European integration and globalization.

3. THE OPEN-AIR FACTORY

3.1. Shaping the concept

“The Open-Air Factory concept can be the basis of sharing and co-developing, as it was at first conceived in order to overcome Pafos’s primary setback -the lack of large indoor spaces for culture- but has since developed into an overarching narrative that draws everything together: the proposed cultural projects, the virtual and physical spaces of the city, the district, the country and Europe, and, most importantly, the people who will participate in this cultural celebration; the Factory’s manpower. The openness of the model refers to space, to the participants and to time, meaning that the Factory to be set up in 2017 will continue to produce culture over an area wider than Pafos, for people all over Europe, and beyond the landmark date.”¹⁴

For 2017, Pafos proposes to transform itself into an Open-Air Factory for culture. For most of the year, from March to November, Pafos enjoys the Mediterranean sun and breezes, with mostly mild temperatures and little rainfall. It also boasts some of the most beautiful landscapes in Cyprus, stretching along a recently remodeled seafront, with extensive archaeological grounds, wooded mountains to the east and the natural preserve of the Akamas peninsula to the north. So, in lieu of proposing an ambitious urban building program in order to accommodate the ECoC events, Pafos will rather organize a network of mainly outdoor venues spread in the entire district:

- Instead of committing significant financial resources on permanent infrastructure more fitting for a larger metropolitan region, Pafos proposes a series of adjustable temporary structures in open spaces, within the spirit of the Open Air Factory.
- Instead of building large indoor performance venues (Theater, Music and Concert halls), a smaller theater was suggested, complemented with the restoration of existing stages and

¹⁴ Pafos 2017 Working Group, 2011, p. 47.

outdoor temporary structures. Music concerts, dance performances and plays will be spread in the streets, squares and courtyards of Pafos.

- Instead of official museum and exhibition spaces, the entire city will be transformed into a living museum, with promenades and paths that invite the visitors to explore the city and the locals to re-discover it.

The Open Air Factory is to develop as a framework for cultural production that encompasses the entire district, spatially and socially. It is envisioned as a dispersed structure with various sections, units, and workshops set-up in Pafos, in the district's municipalities and villages, in the rest of the island and overseas. Openness characterizes the locations of production but also an invitation to all, young and old, locals, immigrants and visitors, artists and lay-people to participate, to "work" in its units. It is a network of spaces, indoors and outdoors, urban and rural, and a network of people, in Pafos, in Cyprus, and abroad. It is a celebration of our living outdoor culture and a reminder that in our part of the world culture bloomed as an open-air activity, in forests, theaters and agoras. It is also a forum for co-creation without prejudice and exclusion. And it is a flexible, open-ended procedure that began with the bid and promises to continue its production well after 2107.

3.2. Shaping the bid

Once Pafos was selected, along with Nicosia, to proceed to Phase 2 of the bidding process, a series of volunteer workshops was organized in order to inform and complement the bidding effort with the assistance of Pafos's citizens, locals, immigrants and visitors; the Open Air Factory was already setting up its production units in Pafos. So far in the process, this appears to be one of its most successful stages, because these workshops managed to

- communicate the ideas and content of the ECoC institution to a city- and district-wide audience,
- coalesce the various social groups of Pafos around a common cause, where everyone was welcome and encouraged to contribute,
- provide a platform for local communities and average citizens to express their ideas and participate in the decision-making process,
- produce fresh and innovative ideas concerning aspects of the bid, re-shaping many aspects of the bid's concept and future implementation,
- prove the strong support and engagement of Pafos's population with the effort and the potential designation, and
- create the sense of joint ownership of the project for a large part of the population, enhance feelings of civic pride and a collective vision for the future of the city.

The Urban Design and Infrastructure Workshop was supported by the Technical Departments of Pafos and the district's other municipalities and communities, who presented plans for future projects. Although there were plans for remodeling public spaces and an extensive pedestrianisation of the center in Ktima, they were not part of an overall urban development plan that would include the entire city (both Ktima and Kato Pafos and surrounding developments). There is no such plan for Pafos, and the results of unplanned and haphazard growth are obvious in a city center that has surrendered its functions to a periphery of malls and car-led development.

The participants in the workshop were mostly architects, planners and engineers, representing a cross-section of generations and experiences, and the various nationalities living and working in Pafos. What everyone had in common was a genuine concern for the future of the city's physical space and urban identity. More than an ECoC bid, all participants embraced the workshop as a long-awaited forum to discuss the city's problems and propose solutions.

3.3. Shaping the spatial program

From the beginning of the discussion, the Open Air Factory structure became an opportunity to revisit the city's and the district's public spaces in order to restore their urban, social and civic meaning. Lacking an urban or regional plan to provide a spatial and developmental strategy, the workshop focused on shaping a network of outdoor and indoor spaces, identifying and using existing gaps as loops to re-weave the urban fabric. The projects that were selected for further development and inclusion in the ECoC application fulfill three basic criteria:

- they can be components of a long-term development strategy for the area
- their implementation will benefit the area regardless of the ECoC outcome
- they can be completed in time for 2017.

The projects range from small pavilions to entire buildings and from urban spaces to protected natural landscapes. Some are already mature and some have only just been born, some have secured financing and some are hoping. A number of them are located in and around the city of Pafos, and in its surrounding municipalities, but many are set in the villages and landscapes of the Akamas Peninsula and Troodos Mountains. The intention was to include projects in the entire district in order to support public spaces in all settings, urban or rural, and promote their cultural, social and economic potential, along with issues of preservation and sustainability.

Interventions within the city of Pafos may be grouped in four main areas (Figure 1):

- Kato Pafos: The integration of the archaeological sites of Nea Pafos with the subsequent phase of the settlement -the fishing village- and the current state, and the creation of an eco-corridor between two Natura 2000 designated areas dissected by a traffic artery. The "Square of Religions" is part of the new development here, as an acknowledgment of Pafos's multi-cultural past, present and future. The new footpaths and bridges would re-insert the presently isolated archaeological sites into the urban fabric and into everyday itineraries and rejuvenate neglected areas of Kato Pafos. New piers, permanent and temporary, that project out into the sea, will strengthen the city's relationship with the waterfront and offer space for cultural events.
- Ktima: A number of flagship projects are located along the upper city's main spine, Griva Digeni / Archbishop Makariou Avenue (the new Municipal Theater, the Municipal Garden, City Hall Square, Kennedy Square, the Othello and the Markideion theaters restoration), in order to form what we call "the cultural promenade" as a continuous public space that will also encourage pedestrian and bicycle traffic, and small business growth. Of these projects, only the new Municipal Theatre will require significant funds; the rest of the projects are regarded as 'flagship' in terms of their visibility –located in the heart of the city- and their expected contribution to stimulating activity and growth in the area.
- Mouttalos (Ktima): this used to be the center of the Turkish-Cypriot community in Pafos and, soon after 1974, the center of a thriving refugee community. It is now largely deserted and ignored, despite its privileged location adjacent to the center of Ktima, and the neighborhood character that has been preserved. An extensive urban regeneration program is expected to re-connect Mouttalos with the center of Ktima and generate interest in the area. This involves the pedestrianisation of the main street, Namik Kemal, the redesign of the squares at both its ends (the plaza around Hagia Sophia Mosque and Ismet Inonou Square) and a landscaped park at the foot of Mouttalos hills. The Open Khan is another flagship project that involves the restoration of the Turkish-Cypriot Ibrahim Khan (an inn) in the city center, as a joint bi-communal project, and its reuse as a cultural center with outdoor and indoor workshops, exhibition spaces and a library. It will have a leading presence in the Pafos 2017 program.

- Network of open public spaces: the idea of bringing culture at people's front doors is expressed in a chain of landscaped spaces that links Pafos's neighborhoods, reclaiming public spaces as centers of activity, culture and environmental awareness. A specific area has been selected and developed indicatively as a pilot project.

A sample of the projects spread in the District of Pafos would include:

- The Akamas Project, another flagship proposal, to be developed as a pilot project for the preservation and management of protected natural and built environments. The Akamas peninsula is a Natura 2000 designated area and this project will create itineraries that connect natural sites with the villages of Akamas (foot- and bicycles paths, buildings etc.), and promote agro-tourism and alternative forms of tourism as a sustainable mode of development for the area.
- The Lemba Arts Village and Cyprus College of Arts, a scheme that will expand the existing Cyprus College of Art into an integrated artistic campus with accommodation, teaching and exhibition facilities, an installation/sculpture park and a small auditorium, in order to forge stronger and more permanent links with the international arts community and to welcome a more diverse group of participants in its activities.
- The landscaping of the Polis Chrysochous Waterfront and Eucalyptus Forest Campsite with particular attention to issues of sustainability, accessibility and touristic management.

Albeit short, these examples may provide an idea of the vision for Pafos 2017 and beyond. Pafos's Open Air Factory is a concept that embraces people and natural resources and brings them together in the context of culture. For Pafos, the relationship with one another and with the city is matter of culture. In a time of economic and, eventually, social crisis, Pafos aims to propose a model for growth that does not require exorbitant financial resources but is based on those already in abundance; human capital, natural and man-made environment and historic continuity.

Pafos will also set up a monitoring mechanism in order to assess both the pre-designation process, the 2017 activities and the post-2017 impact of the ECoC and provide insight regarding the District's cultural governance, spatial strategy, community participation and integration, fiscal and tourism policies. The "Pafos 2017 Barometer" is the primary evaluation tool that aims to function as an instrument for short- and long-term critical assessment, rather than a device to promote or justify hosting the title, and to potentially lay the foundations for developing an official Cypriot cultural observatory.

4. TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION

It remains to be seen to what extent the spatial component of the Pafos 2017 ECoC program will be realized and what its actual effects will be on the area's cultural, social and financial composition. The spatial network idea intrinsic to the Open Air Factory concept may, if successfully implemented, provide balanced decisions regarding the three 'dilemmas' that Bianchini singled out regarding the impact of cultural policies on urban regeneration schemes. The network idea weaves space, activity and time in an intricate mechanism whose operation places more demands on thoughtful and precise cultural, spatial and time planning rather than economic resources. It also sets a foundation for the longevity of the projects, as it promotes cultural production and participation over a wide territory, given of course the persistence of political understanding and support for their continuation. Cultural consumption, which will become key in Pafos's tourist policy, can be combined with cultural production for those wishing to remain active even during their holiday; again, within the concept of shared creative platforms for locals and visitors, artists

and lay-people. When it comes to even spatial distribution of resources between center and periphery, the Open Air Factory network has striven to establish connections all over the entire District of Pafos; even ‘flagship’ projects are viewed less as urban jewels and more as a string of pearls that successively focuses on blighted urban areas.

So far, the active participation of Pafos’s citizens in the bidding process has managed to include themes of social integration and multi-cultural involvement in both the cultural and the spatial vision for the area. The volunteer workshops, held in the Pafos 2017 Headquarters, already organized a physical and a virtual space for the exchange of ideas, the shaping of a shared vision for the city’s future and the forging of a collective urban consciousness within people of diverse backgrounds. As such, this is a space already infused with most of the characteristics of a public space, pushing the potential development of the city in a sustainable, culture- and citizen-oriented direction. It will be an interesting journey to 2017.

This paper was presented at the International Conference ‘Changing Cities: Spatial, morphological, formal & socio-economic dimensions’, held in Skiathos, Greece, on 18-21 June 2013. Sections of this paper have been based on ideas and texts developed for the Pafos 2017 Bid with Prof. C. Karaletsou and A. Sivitanidou, colleagues in the School of Architecture, Land and Environmental Sciences, Neapolis University Pafos and co-participants in the Pafos 2017 Working Group and Workshop Coordination Team.

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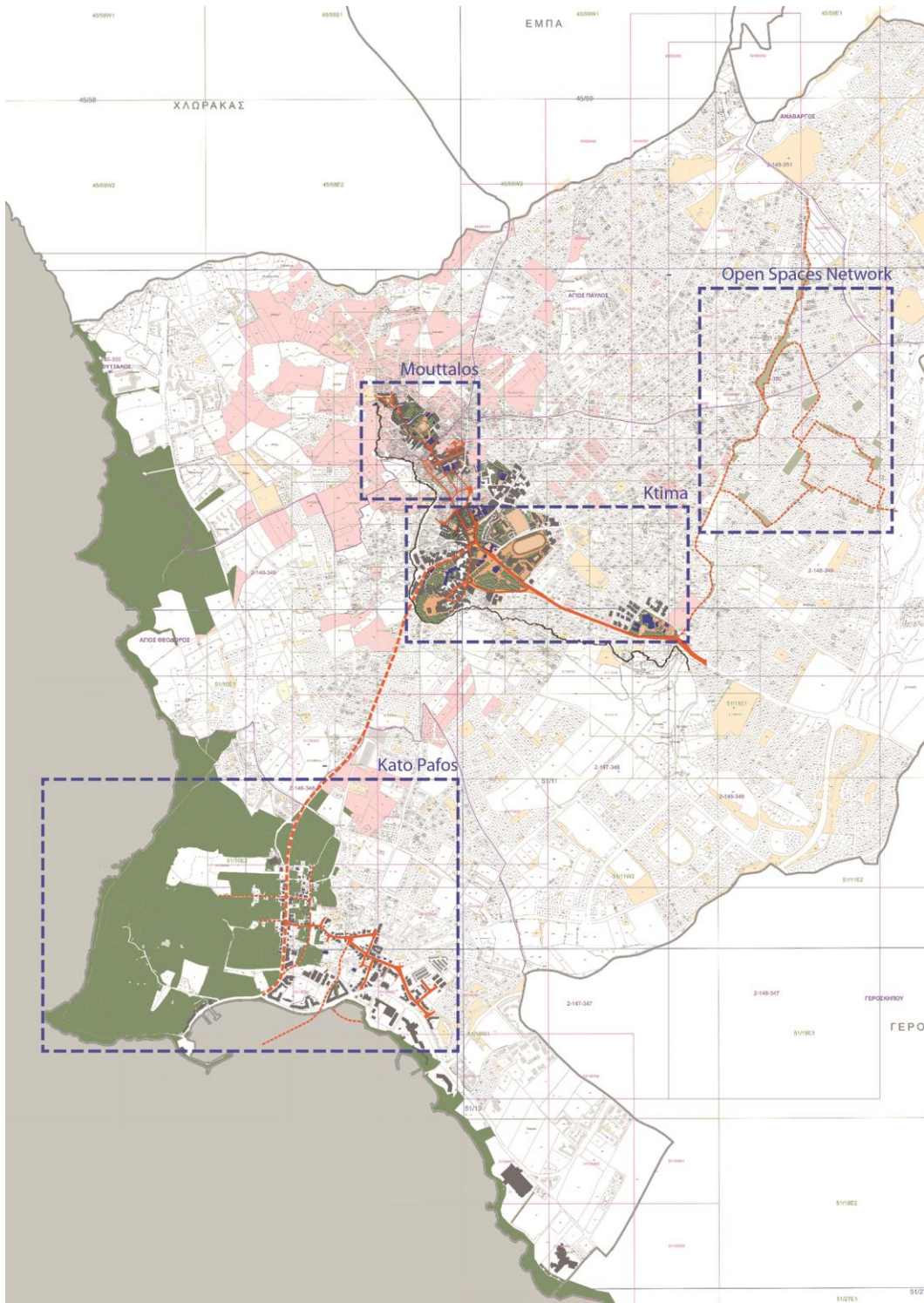


Figure 1. Pafos Map with main intervention areas (source: A. Sivitanidou, E. Dova).