

Preface

Shkodra is one of the biggest municipalities of Albania. It is almost like the 'capital' of northern Albania with strong impact also in Montenegro and Kosova. The city has a great history and culture, and was considered a stronghold of anticommunist resistance between 1945-1990. Since then it went towards a turbulent transition during 90-s and a significant transformation in the last 10-15 years. Nowadays Shkodra is one of 3-4 main cultural-touristic attractions of the country, but the city is facing also the problems of national recession after 2010. Since the three years ago a newly elected female Mayor - previously an expert of local governance - has been trying to build a team and draft/implement a participatory development vision, at least for the next decade of Shkodra. The new territorial-administrative reform of the country created chances for establishing a great municipality in terms of surface, resources and boundaries, but no real fiscal and resources decentralization has been following from the central government. Meantime the newly established municipality did not inherit a readymade strategy and plan, despite those for the 'old/urban' municipality before the reform.

Therefore the mayor could generate support from central government (AKTP, National Agency of Territorial Planning and expertise from Polis University Tirana and Arizona State University, USA. During 2016 an intensive bottom-up process of public consultations was initiated, with public community meetings, sectoral and institutions meetings, professional networks and interests groups meetings. All was about transparency, and this achieved by many public meetings, online charrettes, live television broadcasting, focused groups and thematic meetings, etc. Thanks to such process a municipal strategic vision and a general local territorial plan was drafted and latter approved with debate at Municipal Council of Shkodra. A second filtering and approval was also undertaken by several ministries and by the national territorial committee of the central governments. At this moment Shkodra has an important document to guide its own present and future developments.

However the local situation is not as perfect as it seems. Financing for the strategic projects and programs is harmed by the lack of financing of central government's share. Meantime, the climate change has negative impact over the vast municipal territory that expands from Albanian Alps mountainous region (north-east), ending up to the Adriatic coastline (west). Municipality is part of one of the richest water energy production watershed regions, but flooding is becoming annual emergency for the western plain of Shkodra. Life of people is endangered, while material and financial costs are increased and agriculture/business is

harmful. What can be the emergent interventions? What can be mid- and long-term strategic programs and projects? The general strategic territorial plan that was drafted and approved helps to orient interventions and developments. But more is needed to help local communities and improve quality of life.

Therefore, cooperation between Municipality of Shkodra and Polis University continued in a qualitative way. Two years ago a group of researchers and staff from the Joint International PhD Program of Polis University and University of Ferrara Italy, started a research project for the region of Shkodra with the core theme: the relation between water and territorial development. The starting point was the work done by Municipality and POLIS/ASU as regarding the general strategic territorial plan (PPV). A field visit was also undertaken in the region including Shkodra, Podgorica, Ulqin and all the rest of living settlements and territories around Shkodra lake. The ecosystem of Shkodra Lake, Buna and Drini River was studied, especially in relation with the city of Shkodra and flooded areas. Other focus was to understand different territorial typologies and for each of the to develop models of interventions and development in the form of strategic interventions. Case studies from other international experiences served as reference to adopt to local conditions, and as result several strategic projects are generated. We hope in this way that the contribution of our International PhD Program between POLIS and UNIFE does not simply remain theoretical and academic, but inspires and helps local authorities to detail further the so called PPV Plan. This is also a great example of how local government institutions and academic and research institutions can work together to improve the lives of people and communities! We believe this publication serves for that!

Last but not least, the publication is part the International PhD Program research series, published by POLIS_Press in cooperation with UNIFE, starting with the national visioning: Albania 2030 Manifesto; continuing with regional plans of Durara, Riviera, Semani, Prishtina. This series of publication is also documented by several international and partner libraries, including the Library of Congress, Washington DC, USA.

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