

## Preface

*The research and applied project: Re-Inventing Phoeniciae (FINIQ): New Intersections of Tradition, Innovation, Landscapes and Tourism; has its origine since two years ago. The mayor of Finiq Municipality (Southern Albania and a cross-border region with Greece), at that time, Mr. Kristaq Kristo, called the rector of POLIS University and asked for help and cooperation. He stated that .... we have a plan (PPV / GLP – Plani i Pergjithshme Vendor / General Local Plan) but it was mainly driven by external expertise hired by the central government, and we don't have capacities to really understand and translate it now into concrete projects with tangible results for local communities and businesses. So, given the reputation of POLIS for its dynamic profile of research and a rich university's Third Mission, this sounded to be another interesting experience of cooperation and useful assistance for people, institutions and society. The municipality is also one of two local governments where (Greek) minority communities live in Albania.*

*The rector discussed with deans responsible for Planning and Research Faculties (Dr. Lllazar Kumaraku and Dr. Skender Luarasi) and all together decided to work in this projects under two main professional pillars, in the framework of: i) the annual "Urban Planning Studio" - an interdisciplinary course, bringing together 10 academic staff and almost 150 students from the Architecture, Urban Planning, and Environmental Studies programs; ii) the annual "International PhD Workshop" - jointly organized by POLIS University and Ferrara University Italy, bring together 10 academic staff, and 20 PhD researchers. The first studio prepares a kind of quick overview analysis and key proposals for acupunctural interventions distributed over the municipal territory and living settlements, with the objective of meeting emergent needs and ideas of communities to improve their lives. The second one looks more in depth to the most strategic and resilient interventions and provides guidelines and conceptual ideas for design projects to be further elaborated in favor of concrete implementation.*

*.Together with mayor and his staff, and after several site visits and meetings with communities all over municipality, 4-5 strategic projects were identified and elaborated, while a set of other project ideas were documented. The main outcome was summarized, presented and submitted to the ADF (Albanian Development Fund) with the idea to mobilize funding for implementation. Unfortunately, local elections interrupted such process, however POLIS*

*University is in contact also with the new mayor and his own staff to push for further positive developments in favor of local development and communities.*

*One last important remark for the relative success of such experience has been the fact that the local mayor has been acting as a real local and political "champion" of the planning process. He seems to understand the importance of planning and its process, and this is a good precondition for successful initiatives in this aspect. From the other side, once more POLIS University and its own partners, undertook a non-conventional planning process that combined academic, research and practice interests with the logic of universities' Third Mission, providing support and expertise to communities and authorities in need. The experience is documented via this scientific journal "OMB Journal" published by "Polis University Press" in cooperation with Observatory of Mediterranean Basin near the Innovation Factory of POLIS University. The research work is confronted with other international and interdisciplinary experiences, while further lessons are drawn up. It took at least one year and half to complete such scientific work, and translate it in a pure scientific issue no.9 with two volumes: i) Policy-Based Volume A; ii) and Project-Based Volume B. We hope it will be useful for authorities, professional readers and researchers.*

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