

Preface

This scientific journal publication is a research outcome of the Joint International PhD Program (Double Degree) between Polis University, Tirana Albania; and Ferrara University, Italy. For more than one decade (starting from year 2012) both universities are working together to coordinate their own research program and strategies, with a strong social responsibility dimension towards local communities and authorities especially in Albania (struggling to join EU), but also in Italy. The origin of such work stays with 2 initial document documented at <https://press.universitetipolis.edu.al/omb-scientific-journal/> : i) Albania 2030, a Spatial Planning and National Development vision; and ii) The Regionalization of Albania – The Governance, Administrative and Territorial Reform that Albania needs on a Regional Level; both assisted by our research institute Co-PLAN Institute for Habitat Development.

Since than our PhD Program has selected: a region, or a municipality, or a territorial thematic strip; and has been focused to elaborate further professionally and scientifically the developmental policies, plans and designs in favor especially to local authorities and communities in need. Albania has been reducing in population due to rapid decline of demographic trends, as well as emigration of brain and young people. So the main dilemma and question mark remains how to stop such process, and encourage a development trend that gives hope to local residents to better explore in a sustainable and resilient way the rich menu of the resources in their own local/regional territory. Combined this with growing trends of tourism, energy and agriculture it can bring back life to the abandoned peripheral regions, where most of resources stays. This is also a reverse process of massive emigration towards capital region Tirana. However, there is no Albania without the amazing peripheries and regions. Since then our program has provided at least visions for 9 regional puzzles , while 2 latest are under process. This is a direct contribution to society (Third Mission of Universities) that our universities and our PhD Program is materializing every year.

This year the focus has been the cross border region of Prespa lakes, one of the most beautiful regions between Albania, Northern Macedonia and Greece. However the developmental problems are growing, and visions are missing. Especially the Albanian part appears to be disadvantaged economically due to the accumulated problems of the past. Cross border

infrastructure is problematic among Greece and Northern Macedonia. Tourism potentials are not coordinated among three countries, minimizing the benefit of local communities. This stimulates a negative culture towards environmental aspects, climate change, as they remain treated fragmented while the habitat is one. These specific two issues of the "OMB Scientific Journal" packed in one annual journal aim to document the work done during the international workshop at Polis University (including field trip to Prespa region in three countries), and then the one year independent work of students and staff with their individual research. The issue 1/2025 focuses "Policy Based Aspects"; while the issue 2/2025 concentrates on the "Project based Aspects". Hopefully it will be a reference now and in the future, when Albania and Northern Macedonia will join EU.

We must thank especially local and regional authorities, such as: the Mayor and Municipality of Prespa Albania; the representative of the Regional Cultural Heritage Office of Bitola; and deputy mayor of Florina Greece, that welcomed us in the field and their own institutions providing a lot of hints and feedback for the process of research. Without them it would have been impossible to implement such project and publication. Special thanks goes to the "Faculty of FKZH/FR&D" and "OMB Research Unit" and "Polis-Press Unit" at "IF Innovation Factory / POLIS University" (Dr. Gent Avdija, Prof. As. Skender Luarasi, Prof. As. Llazar Kumaraku, Prof. Emeritus Pantoleon D. Skayannis, Prof. Theo Zaffagnini, Prof. Roberto Di Giulio, Sadmira Malaj, etc. and many other staff that contributed via lectures, advices or consultation and support), and University of Ferrara / IDAUP. Without them it would have been impossible.

We hope it will be useful vision document and methodology towards local and regional authorities, to students, professionals, researchers and academic staff.

Thank you to all whom contributed!

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