

1. Introduction

Considered as very poor, providing the second lowest living standard in Europe, Albania entered in a transition period from a state-socialist economy towards a market economy at the end of 1990. This process, developed during a period of economic and political unrest, had also a very strong impact in the population's way of living and was accompanied by a large flow of migration within and out the country. As one of the driving forces of the redistribution of population in this period, internal migration has been one of the most dynamic features of the Albanian transition (UNPD 2002). From a demographic point of view, internal migration shows first the degree of change of the territorial distribution of the population during a certain period. Secondly, in absolute terms, migration accounts for the numerical increase or decrease of the population. For these reasons, migration is part of the demographic evolution of the regions, as well as an indicator of social changes such as urbanization and depopulation. The aim of this paper is to gain insight into the role of internal migration in the transition of Albania both as a consequence of the transition itself, and as a trigger of the subsequent societal processes.

2. Transition as a trigger for large population redistribution

The transition period, which is still going on to the present days, for the very specificity of Albania (the crises of pyramid investments schemes, the Kosova crises 1999, the events from FYROM and the frequently irrational conflicts between the political powers), would leave very distinctive traces on the social, economical and urban development all over the country. One of the many areas affected by the demise of central planning and one-party rule in Albania is internal migration, expressed in massive urbanization of some areas and depopulation of others. The internal migration behavior, dimensions, intensity, direction, and motives have been determined by the economic, political, and social developments that have occurred in Albania over this time (INSAT, 2004). During this transition process, many important reforms have been implemented such as price and trade liberalization, privatization of state owned enterprises and privatization of strategic sectors, private sector development, and other reforms in different sectors such as education, health, social services etc. Apart from some progress achieved in the social agenda during transition, there is clear evidence that shows the existence of significant disparities in the living standards of different areas, which has been one of the main reasons promoting the redistribution of the population within the country. This paper discusses the important role of the transition process, as the economy of the country moves towards the open market, in the redistribution of the population from rural towards urban areas

3. Recent evidence on migration in Albania

The 2001 Albanian Population and Housing Census revealed that 182 600 persons living in Albania in 2001 moved from one region to another between 1989 and 2001. These migrants accounted for 5.7% of the total population in 1989. Different surveys and other sources of data suggest that the number of internal migrants has increased from the last census. The most common form of internal migration is urbanization: the urban population has increased in the last census compared with the previous one from 33.5 in 1979 in only 35.7 in 1989 and 42.1 in 2001 (table 1).

Table 1: Population urban and rural districts, 2001, 1989, 1979

POPULATION (%)		URBAN (%)	RURAL (%)
Year	Total	Total	Total
2001	100 %	42,1 %	57,9%
1989	100%	35,7 %	64,3%
1979	100%	33,5 %	66,5%

Source : INSTAT (2002)

The massive urbanization continues in the recent years and according to different estimates, the recent urban population is actually surpassing the rural. These levels of urbanization are mainly the result of an internal rural-urban migration.

People move away from the poorer uplands in the North towards better economical conditions in the low lands and major centers of the country, resulting in the overpopulation and the massive urbanization of some cites and the depopulation of others, especially rural areas. The most serious population loss is observed in the rural north, as well as in the rural south. The regions that have gained the most in term of population numbers have been the lowland especially the central areas. This paper addresses the dynamic of internal movements in Albania during the post communist transition that has accompanied the country these years (from 1990), focusing mainly on its features and the importance of this phenomenon as a promoter of many demographic changes following the democratization process after 1990s.

4. Massive urbanization in Tirana, case of Kamza

According to Human Development Report, internal migration expressed in urbanization has contributed to increased levels of conflict in urban areas. For the first time in the history of Albania, families, individuals, and social groups that hardly know each other have moved into urban neighborhoods together. They now share the same public spaces although they have very different costumes, mentalities, and life styles (UNPD 2002). Urban zones, especially Tirana, grew disproportionately in comparison to the rest of the urban regions in Albania. According to recent data and studies, Tirana, the capital of Albania, is the preferred destination for the majority of internal migrants. In this area, especially after the 90s is concentrated everything: the population, investments, industry, services, building industry etc. Therefore, it has strongly reinforced it's dominate position in Albania becoming a very attractive location. The 2001 Albanian Population and Housing Census revealed that Tirana accounts for over half of the inter-prefecture population movement between 1989 and 2001. Tirana has continually increased in size through years, especially after the 90s, from 243.900 inhabitants to 518.143 between 1989 and 2004 (INSTAT, 2001, 2002, and 2004).

One of the areas where internal migrants are concentrated in Tirana is the municipality of Kamza. Existing data suggests that in this municipality the current population is ten times higher than in early 1989, shifting from 6,000 to an estimated 60,000 inhabitants. Kamza, is an example of extremely disordered urbanization process that took place during the 1990s in the entire country. It is forecasted that if the government does not take measures to control the movements of population in these area, in 2022 the population will reach 105.000 inhabitants, with a density of 45 inhabitants /ha (Co plan 2002). The current increase of population is a result of in-migration that not only dynamically alters the demographic profile the communities, but also affects their economic, environmental, and socio-cultural profiles as well. The paper will address the developments in Kamza as a case study of extreme urbanization.

5. Depopulation in the rural areas

This high concentration of the population in some areas expresses clearly the regional disparity of this population. The redistribution of the population involves many socio economic and demographic consequences. Internal migration involves the most educated and skilled part of the population in the uplands of the North and south of the country. The active age groups and the higher educated are the most likely groups to migrate. The 2001 census counted 46% individuals with an upper-secondary or higher education qualification in the towns and cities, compared with only 16% in rural areas. In 1989, this category accounted for 22% in rural areas and 50% in urban areas. Migration has thus had a very strong influence in reducing the educated human capital in the rural areas. A second important consequence of this phenomenon is the abandonment of the farmland and rural communities. This effect not only implies the social life but also has economical and ecological effects, such as degradation of the land and of the agriculture.

Another social aspect is the abandonment of the older generation. Giving the Albanian family ties, the cultural context as well as in the conditions of a missed community support and very difficult economical and environmental situation of these areas, this abandonment is very painful for the older generation. Remittances are only a partial compensation for this cross- generational family break up as the family reunion or return migration becomes progressively less likely as the time passes (King 2004). This paper intends to understand the main consequences that follow the massive urbanization in some areas of the country and the depopulation of some other areas.

6. Policy implication and further research

In these conditions, this process, as an important element in the Albanian society, needs to be managed and organized through effective policies, community integration, and adaptive strategies. In fact internal migration starting from 1991 in Albania has been characterized by an absence of migration policies, from a controlled and oriented movement in totally free and not controlled movements. It also deserves the right attention from the researchers giving the fact that existent research does not yet give convincing answers to important research questions and also there is not a visible relationship of these studies with the migration policies, such linkages are an absolute necessity for the implementation of these policies. There is a need to document the socioeconomic and demographic factors that influence the internal migration, the varying consequences to individual migrants and families, and policies which internal migration can be controlled and organized. Finally, the paper draws attention to the need for effective migration policies and further research on issues concerning migration especially in the Albanian transformation context.

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