

Demographic Dynamics and Characteristics of Urbanization in Albania in the First Decade of Transition: The first steps in shaping the demographic-territorial model of transition

Dr. Gentian KAPRATA¹

Abstract

The population of Albania in the decade 1989-2001 decreased to about 282 thousand inhabitants, as a result of two phenomena: (i) external migration; and (ii) lowering the fertility rate. Albanian society was also affected by the phenomenon of internal migration that produced: (i) the increase in the level of urbanization of the country; and (ii) demographic imbalance in the territory. Two main trends of internal emigration were distinguished: (i) rural-rural; and (ii) rural-urban. Both of these contributed to the increase in the level of urbanization of the country, and to the imbalance of regions

¹ Dr. Gentian Kaprata. PhD in Applied Social Sciences, European University of Tirana (UET); MA (Second Level master's degree), Globalization and Development, Political Science, UET; BA + MA in Architecture, received the Urbanist award, Polytechnic University of Tirana, Faculty of Civil Engineering. Author of several publications on urban, political issues and the relations between them in scientific journals at home and abroad; Urban Planning Expert at the Institute of Urban Studies and Designs (IUSD) and member of the Technical- Research Council of IUSD, 2002-2010; General Director of Policies in Construction, Housing and Territorial Planning, and Director of Urban Policies and Housing, at the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, 2010-2013; Member of the Technical Secretariat of the Territorial Adjustment Council of the Republic of Albania. External lecturer at UET, 2019-2021. Currently a full-time lecturer at UET, at the Faculty of Engineering, IT and Architecture.

of the country. There were four internal migration trends, of which: (i) three towards the central area of the country; and (ii) one towards the Western Lowlands. All four of these trends (lines) created the imbalance of population distribution, creating: (i) the concentrated region of Tirana-Durres; (ii) the non-partisan Fier-Vlora region; and (iii) the abandoned region that included the other eight counties of the country. The districts of Tirana, Durrës, Vlora and Fier dominate in the attraction of internal migrants, which reached 252,700 people. Only 9 out of 36 districts of the country or 25% of them had a positive demographic balance, while 27 districts or 75% of them suffered a negative balance. The phenomenon of population concentration in large urban centers is present in large cities, but it is especially noticeable in the capital, which grew (i) four times more than the total physical development of 40 years during 1945-1985, as well as (ii) with 151.500 new residents.

Keywords: demography, external migration, internal migration, fertility rate, urbanization level, demographic-territorial model, population concentration, population abandonment

Introduction

This paper aims to present and analyze the demographic structure, the level of urbanization and the demographic-territorial model of Albania in the first decade of transition. It tries to put together all the information collected by other researchers regarding demography, external and internal migration, population distribution and inhabited centers throughout the National territory. The paper aims to analyze these data, to understand and present the level of urbanization of the country and the characteristics of the urban-spatial structure, in the period studied.

The article starts with an overview of the level of demography, in the period between 1989-2001. Referring to the population and housing census in 2001, the population number was 3,069,275 inhabitants (INSTAT, 2001), with a significant decrease from 3,282,417 inhabitants in 1989 (INSTAT, 2004: 31, 2014). The decreased level of demography came as a result of two demographic and social phenomena: (i) external migration, according to which approximately 710,000 Albanians left the country (INSTAT, 2004: 10), and (ii) the decrease of the fertility rate from 3.3 in 1990 to 2.2 in 2000 (INSTAT, 2004: 32), as the first contributor to the reduction of natural population growth.

The Albanian society of the first decade of transition was also affected by the phenomenon of internal migration that produced an increase in the level of urbanization in the country. In this sense, the paper continues with the presentation of the increase in the housing stock as an indicator for the increased

level of urbanization. In 2001 compared to 1989, the number of new residential buildings in the urban area increased almost 2 times, while in the countryside this rate was almost 4 times lower, or 87.4% in urban areas, against 19.4% in rural areas (INSTAT, 2014: 10; Misja and Misja, 2004).

There are two characteristics of urbanization in relation to the housing stock: (i) an average of 6.4 dwellings per 1000 inhabitants were built, this indicator is higher than the average of 4.1 in the European Union (Misja and Misja, 2004); (ii) the creation of the stock of unoccupied housing (INSTAT, 2014), to the extent of 9.7% in rural areas compared to 13.1% in urban areas.” (INSTAT, 2014: 13).

Further, the paper focuses on the two basic trends of internal migration (rural-rural, rural-urban) as an indicator of the increased level of urbanization. One of the important phenomena in the early 90s was the migration of about 1 million Albanians, mainly from rural areas (INSTAT, 2014: 9). As a logical consequence, the citizen population increased from 32% to 42% of the country’s total population (Faja, 2008: 18; INSTAT, 2004: 9-10, 2001).

There were two main trends: (i) rural-rural migration, which included about 64% of immigrants and was destined mainly to the peri-urban areas of large cities (Vullnetari, 2007: 61; INSTAT, 2004: 14; King and Vullnetari, 2003; King, 2010) and produced the “urbanization of the rural” (Fuga, 2012: 51); as well as (ii) rural-urban migration that was expressed in the amount of 36% of immigrants and increased the level and density of the population in the existing urban centers (Vullnetari, 2007: 61, 2012; INSTAT, 2014: 10)

The presentation and analysis of internal migration from the inter-regional approach as an indicator for the increased level of urbanization, will be the further aim of the paper. 182.600 – 355.230 people moved from the region of their original residence to another, between 1989-2001 (INSTAT, 2004: 12; Vullnetari, 2007: 61). Observed from the regional approach: (i) about 91% of inter-regional migrants have moved towards the center and the coast (INSTAT, 2004: 12; Vullnetari, 2007: 61-63); and (ii) about 60% of migrants lived in the north, 32% in the south and 8% in the central coast. (INSTAT, 2004: 12).

Further, the paper will present the four trends of internal migration, of which three in the direction of the central area of the country and specifically in the counties of Tirana and Durrës, and one in the direction of the Western Lowlands and especially in the counties of Vlorë and Fier (Vullnetari, 2007: 62, 2010; INSTAT, 2004: 24-25). The origin of the four lines comes to the extent of 60% from the North, 30% from the South and the rest from the Central/Coastal regions (Vullnetari, 2007: 62).

An essential characteristic of this period, taken in the study, was the internal migration within the region, which also contributed to the increase in the level of urbanization. While 182,600 people moved from one region to another, the

migration between counties numbers 252,700 people (INSTAT, 2004: 12). This phenomenon will introduce population concentration not only according to the three regions of the country, but also among different districts of the same region. The four counties that are included in the Great Region and the Middle Region of the country, the counties of Tirana, Durrës, Vlora and Fier dominate in the attraction of internal migrants (INSTAT, 2004: 13; BB, 2007: 4).

The paper continues with the presentation of internal migration within the county as an indicator of the increased level of urbanization and especially the concentration-abandonment of the population. Internal migratory movements were not only between counties, but also between districts of the same prefecture, between municipalities and between villages and the city (INSTAT, 2004: 12). Observed from this approach, it can be said that in the period 1989-2001, only 9 out of 36 districts of the country or 25% of them have a positive balance, while 27 districts or 75% of them have a negative balance in terms of internal migration (INSTAT, 2004).

The phenomenon of population concentration in large urban centers is particularly noticeable in the capital. Only during the period 1990-1994, the population of Tirana increased from 374,500 to 475,000 inhabitants. In physical terms, the city has grown four times more than the total physical development of 40 years during 1945-1985. Whereas for the period 1990-2001, the population of Tirana [city 42 km²] increased by 151,500 inhabitants, that is (41%) and 2/3 of these internal migrants, that is, (105,000 individuals) live today inside city, 1/3 lives in the rural areas of the district of Tirana (IHS alumni, et al., 1998: 102; INSTAT, 2004: 40).

The paper closes with some findings and conclusions, as well as some modest recommendations.

Purpose and methodology of the paper

The first goal of this paper is the collection of data regarding the population level (demography), the housing stock, the level of urbanization and internal demographic movements during the period 1989-2001 (the first decade of transition). In this sense, the study, first, aims to contribute to the expansion of knowledge on these demographic and urban/territorial aspects, which is also its first contribution.

The purpose of the paper is to analyze these data to understand the way of development of the country, throughout the period under study, in the aspects of: (i) the urban-rural ratio; (ii) the way of development and growth of residential centers, focusing on the city as the essence of urbanization; (iii) the characteristics

of the Albanian city; (iv) of the urban-spatial structure of the country and its characteristics. The conclusions of this analysis, within the scope of this paper, will contribute to a wider understanding of the urban phenomena of the period under study and the contextual reasons of the subsequent urban-territorial development.

The methodology of this work is based on the analytical one, which is seen as the most suitable in this work, as it explains in a systematic and detailed way the phenomenon taken in the study, throughout the time that the study includes.

The methods used in this paper are qualitative. This paper theoretically evaluates demography, the level of urbanization, the urban-spatial structure, the characteristics of the urban-spatial structure of the country, and the characteristics of the Albanian city in the period studied. This is done by using secondary sources of Albanian authors who have spoken on these topics.

Overview of the level of demography, 1989-2001

The population level of Albania has been measured in several ways, but the most serious way remains through general censuses. From the 10 general population and housing censuses conducted in Albania, during the period 1923-2001, it results that only for the last three censuses (1979, 1989, 2001), there are published and relatively complete data to estimate the number of population and their distribution across the territory of Albania (Misja and Misja, 2004; Vullnetari, 2007, 2012; INSTAT, 2001, 2004, 2014).

Referring to the population and housing census in 2001, the population number was 3,069,275 inhabitants (INSTAT, 2001), which means that the demography has suffered a significant decrease from 3,282,417 inhabitants in 1989 (INSTAT, 2004: 31, 2014) or from about 3.2 million in 1991 (Bërxfholi, 2000; INSTAT, 2014). This decrease in the country's population level has been presented in the amount of about 7% for this first decade of transition.

The population decline in the first years of transition has been addressed by many authors and institutions, such as IHS Alumni in 1998, Misja and Misja in 2004, Aliaj in 2008, Faja in 2008, Fuga in 2004, 2012 and 2019, Gjuraj in 2015, INSTAT in 2004, 2014, etc. These, but also other authors, assessed the level of demography in the country as a result of two demographic and social phenomena. According to them, they are: (i) external migration and (ii) the decrease in the fertility rate.

Migration, in its entirety (external and internal), was a forgotten phenomenon for Albanians under the communist regime (Misja and Misja, 2004; Kotmilo and Kotmilo, 2017; Kaprata, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023). If we refer to INSTAT, "With the establishment of the communist regime, after the second world war,

immigration from Albania was prohibited, while internal migration was limited” (INSTAT, 2004: 9). This phenomenon would be considered ‘national treason’ and according to Article 47 of the Penal Code of 1977, it was punishable by no less than 10 years to death, while other family members were usually exiled (Idrizi, et al, 2018: 97). But with the fall of the monist system, many social balances changed, including the practice of migration.

If we focus only on external migration, as the first contributor to the country’s population level, we can say that “During the period 1989-2001, approximately 700,000 Albanians left the country” (INSTAT, 2004: 10). Of this, about “220,000 immigrants left Albania between 1989 and March 1992 and 300,000 between 1989 and December 1992” (INSTAT, 2004: 34).

The positive balances of population growth also faltered in terms of the decrease in the fertility rate, as the main contributor to the natural increase of demography. If we refer to INSTAT “in 1989, the population was very young with “high growth potential”, in the demographic sense, as a result of the higher fertility rate, compared to other regions of Europe” (INSTAT, 2004: 32), but in this decade “... the child per woman index speaks of a downward trend from 3.3 in 1990 to 2.2 in 2000” (INSTAT, 2004: 32).

This would mean that “The demographic trend observed during the 1990s has led to the acceleration of the phenomenon of population aging.” (INSTAT, 2004: 32). As a result of the aging of the population, “the number of persons aged 0-9 fell by 21% compared to the total number, and for the age group 20-34, the number fell by 26%”, as well as “The ratio of aged residents over 60 years old has increased from 8% to 11% in a period of time between two “Population Censuses”. (INSTAT, 2004: 32).

The Albanian society of the first decade of transition was not only affected by the phenomenon of decreasing demographics, but also by the phenomenon of strong demographic movements. Presented and analyzed by several authors and institutions, such as Vullnetari (2003, 2007, 2010, 2012), King (2003, 2010), Faja (2003, 2008), Aliaj (2003, 2008), Imami (2008), INSTAT (2004), they are: (i) external migration that reduced the overall national population and has a close relationship with internal migration; and (ii) internal migration that produced an increase in the country’s level of urbanization and changed its urban structure.

We will not delve into the phenomenon of external migration, the decrease in the fertility rate and the aging of the population, because it does not directly affect the level of urbanization. However, it should be emphasized that the phenomenon of external migration has a symbiotic relationship with the phenomenon of internal migration (INSTAT, 2004: 63-64, 2014; Vullnetari, 2007), which is the only contributor to the urbanization process of the country.

The increase in housing stock as a contributor to the increased level of urbanization and demographic concentration

We can identify the rapid increase in the level of urbanization first from the housing stock statistics. The analysis of housing registration data shows that, in 2001 compared to 1989, the number of new residential buildings in the urban area has increased nearly 2 times, while in the countryside this rate has been nearly 4 times lower (Misja and Misja, 2004). Ça emphasizes the thesis of internal migration from rural and suburban areas to urban areas of Albania, increasing the level of urbanization of the country.

INSTAT, in its report *"Housing and living conditions"*, in 2014, would support this thesis. According to this study:

"In 2001, a clear trend of population decrease in rural areas and population increase in urban areas was observed, accompanied by a greater increase in the building stock in urban areas (87.4% in urban areas, against 19.4% in rural areas). This was also the first indicator of the change in settlement patterns in Albania." (INSTAT, 2014: 10).

In the same report, INSTAT would underline that "The reduction of the rural population by 26.7% and the increase of the urban population by 15.8% confirm the process of urbanization, while the urban-rural comparison regarding the stock of buildings gives an increase of 54.4% in urban areas compared to only 2.2% in rural areas" (INSTAT, 2014: 10).

Another perspective regarding the dynamics of urbanization in reference to the housing and building stock created in the first decade of transition is given by Misja and Misja in 2004. Based on the data of the general population and housing census 2001, Misja and Misja would refer us that during the period 1991-2001, an average of 19,560 new apartments were built every year or 6.4 apartments per 1000 inhabitants. During the period 1991-1995, this indicator was 5.2 per 1000 inhabitants, while during the period 1996-2001 this indicator increased to 7.5 new dwellings built every year per 1000 inhabitants (Misja and Misja 2004).

To better understand this construction phenomenon that reflects the high dynamics of urbanization, we can say that this Albanian indicator is higher than the European Union average of 4.1. The European countries that have the highest level of housing investment are: Switzerland 1.7 and Denmark 2.9. Comparing the level of new housing completed every year per 1000 inhabitants in Eastern European countries, we notice that Albania has the highest level of this indicator, which speaks of a high increase in the level of urbanization (Misja and Misja, 2004).

But there is another phenomenon that starts in this urbanization period and is further reinforced in the other two phases of urbanization, which is the stock of unoccupied housing (INSTAT, 2014). This stock proves that the urbanization process has progressed even faster than the needs of the population for housing with the aim of housing. Referring to INSTAT, at the end of this urbanization phase, “the number of unoccupied dwellings was 9.7% in rural areas compared to 13.1% in urban areas.” (INSTAT, 2014: 13). These numbers prove the above argument, but also emphasize the dominance of urban areas in terms of unoccupied housing stock.

The two basic trends of internal migration (rural-rural, rural-urban) as a contributor to the increased level of urbanization and demographic concentration

The abandonment of the countryside by the population (decline of the rural population) would be one of the main demographic and urban characteristics in the first decade of the transition. This would not only come as a result of external migration but also as a result of internal migration. This phenomenon would be determined quantitatively by the INSTAT study “*Housing and living conditions*” in 2014. According to this study “One of the important phenomena in the early 90s was the migration of about 1,000,000 Albanians, mainly young people from rural areas” (INSTAT, 2014: 9).

Such figures would also come from the report ‘Migration in Albania; The Population and Housing Census 2001’ of INSTAT, which for its time limits, 1998-2001 would underline that “From rural areas, approximately 900,000 people migrated to urban areas in the interior of the country as well as to other countries.” (INSTAT, 2004: 10).

What stands out in this phase of the country’s urbanization is the fact that the level of urbanization increased significantly, and the ratio of the population in urban areas to the population in rural areas changed rapidly in favor of urban areas. As if Faja would notice:

“The citizen population increased from 32% to 42% of the country’s total population. Internal emigration was mainly concentrated in big cities, especially where the number of inhabitants tripled from 250,000 inhabitants in 1990 to 750,000 inhabitants in 2000. (Faja, 2008: 18).

This definition of Guilt, although in generalized terms and not as quantitative as those given by the specialized institutions that we will refer to later, defines the main contributors from which the urbanization of the first decade of transition developed.

During the period 1992-2000, internal migration involved, on an annual average, about 150,750 people (Vullnetari, 2007: 61, 2010; King and Vullnetari, 2003). As a result of this massive population displacement, the level of urbanization of the country increased from 34% in 1989 (Misja and Misja, 2004) to 42% in 2001 (INSTAT, 2004: 9-10).

Observed in the relationship between urban areas and rural areas, the trend of internal migration went mainly from rural areas to other rural areas (Vullnetari, 2007, 2010, 2012; INSTAT, 2004). About 64% of this internal migration was rural-rural, and was destined mainly to the peri-urban areas of big cities, such as Tirana, Durrës, Shkodër, Korçë (Vullnetari, 2007: 61; King and Vullnetari, 2003; King, 2010) and Fier, Vlora (INSTAT, 2004: 14).

This finding is consistent with the phenomenon of informal construction of the first two phases of urbanization, (Kaprata, 2020, 2021, 2023) because this migratory flow settled in the peripheral territories of large cities where the control of the authorities was lower than in urban areas (Aliaj, 2008; Imami, 2008). If we refer to Aliaj and Aliaj "Since 1990, the population of Tirana and its surrounding suburbs has had an alarming average growth of 7% per year" (IHS alumni, et al., 1998: 102).

Rural-rural migration would affect the increase in the level of urbanization of the country, as a result of the further densification of rural areas that produced the phenomenon of "rural urbanization". As Fuga would say, "In two decades, the former rural area, especially the one located on the main communication routes between the two big metropolises [Tirana, Durres], has become excessively urbanized" (Fuga, 2012: 51).

But rural-urban migration was also present in this time period, and according to INSTAT "The process of urbanization, ascertained in Albania by the Census of 2001, continues to exist and progress, mainly due to internal migration towards urban areas ." (INSTAT, 2014: 10). It was expressed at the rate of 36% of the total internal migration (Vullnetari, 2007: 61, 2012). Referring to INSTAT, this phenomenon brought about a "decrease of the population in rural areas [to the extent of] 13% compared to the data of the 1989 Census" (INSTAT, 2004: 10).

Internal migration from the inter-regional approach as a contributor to the increased level of urbanization and demographic concentration

The phenomenon of urbanization can also be analyzed by directly observing the dynamics and currents of internal migration. It has turned out to be a very massive and very complicated internal displacement of the Albanian population across the national territory (INSTAT, 2004; King and Vullnetari, 2003; Vullnetari, 2007, 2010, 2012).

According to INSTAT, about 182,600 people living in Albania in 2001 undertook internal migration and moved from their region of origin to another between 1989-2001. These internal migrants represent 5.7% of the total national population in 1989 (INSTAT, 2004: 12). These INSTAT figures for internal migration, in general terms, reconcile the figure of 900 thousand inhabitants who have abandoned their place of origin and the figure of 710 thousand citizens who have left Albania, presented above.

Whereas the Volunteer in 2007 gives us totally different figures, while distinguishing the low figures presented by INSTAT in 2004. Referring to the Volunteer, internal migration for the period 1992-2000 was expressed as “1,357,750 internal migrants in 9 years, or almost 40 % of the population of the year 2000”, of which 355.230 thousand only from one region to another region (Vullnetari, 2007: 61).

To understand this dynamic, we will first focus on the first trend of internal migration, that from one county to another county, observed from the regional approach. Referred INSTAT:

“Analyzing the table of migration from prefecture to prefecture during the 12-year period 1989-2001, we distinguish two different types of migration: the first, long-distance migration, directed to the main economic poles in the center of the country; second, migration over somewhat short distances towards the coast, which is a region of immigration and emigration.” (INSTAT, 2004: 13)

Observed from the regional approach “Internal migration in Albania is clearly a one-way migration: about 91% of inter-regional migrants have moved towards the center and the coast [of the country]” (INSTAT, 2004: 12). Therefore, both the central region (which includes the counties of Tirana and Durrës), and the coastal region (which includes the counties of Vlora, Fier and Lezha), in the first decade of the transition, have a high population growth (Vullnetari, 2007: 61 -63).

This would come as a result of inter-regional internal migration, where the immigrant population in the central and coastal region has been 44 times greater than that in the northeast region and 13 times greater than that in the southeast region. Referred to INSTAT “About 60% of migrants lived in the north in 1989, 32% in the south and 8% in the center of the coast. (INSTAT, 2004: 12).

The four trends of internal migration as a contributor to the increased level of urbanization and demographic concentration

Internal migration is recorded in four lines of population displacement, of which three towards the center of the country and specifically in the districts of Tirana and Durrës, and one towards the Western Lowlands and especially in the districts

of Vlorë and Fier. If we refer to Fuga “the entire “periphery” has been poured into the main urban areas of the country” (Fuga, 2004: 12).

Fuga would identify this migration process as “Hundreds of thousands of people or even families [who] went down from the higher altitude areas to the lowlands” (Fuga, 2012: 9). Whereas, according to INSTAT, “Migrants who come from the highlands and the eastern areas of Kukës and Dibra and head for the center of the country.” (INSTAT, 2004: 24).

This is the first line of population displacement towards the center of the country, and specifically in the counties of Tirana and Durrës (Vullnetari, 2007: 62, 2010). These central counties attract migrants, who come from all over the country, but most of the migrants come from the north-east. If we refer to INSTAT, “Kukës and Dibër counties [contribute respectively] to 47% and 40% of immigrants in Tirana and Durrës [counties]” (INSTAT, 2004: 25).

Whereas the second line of displacement starts from the internal regions that include the districts of “Berat, Korçë, Elbasan, Gjirokastër and Shkodër” (INSTAT, 2004: 24) and ends, also towards the center of the country, specifically in the districts of Tirana and Durrës (Vullnetari, 2007, 2012).

The same target towards the area that includes the counties of Tirana and Durrës also has the third line of population displacement that originates from the secondary centers located on the coast that include “Vlorë, Fier, Lezhë” (INSTAT, 2004: 24, Vullnetari, 2007, 2010). These three lines of population displacement from the eastern, interior and coastal regions of the country towards its central region will mark the beginnings of overpopulation in the Tirana-Durra Region.

The demographic and urban empowerment, in this decade, of the Fier-Vlora Region will be created by the fourth line of population displacement, which according to INSTAT in 2004 consists of migrants coming “from the internal areas [counties of Berat, Korçë, Elbasan, Gjirokastër and Shkodër] that go to the secondary centers of the coast of the country [Fier-Vlorë]” (INSTAT, 2004: 24).

Vullnetari would present us the areas of origin of this internal migration, of the four lines, which according to her “slightly more than 60% comes from the North, 30% from the South and the rest from the Central/Coastal regions”, while 90 % of it was aimed at the Central/Coastal region (Vullnetari, 2007: 62).

Observed in the inter-regional approach, we can also identify the depopulation of eight other regions of the country. But even these would have different dynamics of population abandonment, which are expressed in “relative values, the prefectures that had the highest number of the general population that emigrated are: first Dibra, followed by Kukësi, Elbasan and Berat “ (INSTAT, 2004: 13), while only the counties of Kukes and Dibra would contribute with about 37% of the migrated population, or “92,300 immigrants” (INSTAT, 2004: 14).

Internal migration within the region as a contributor to the increased level of urbanization and demographic concentration

Internal migration and the increase in the level of urbanization of Albania in the first decade of transition becomes more evident if we observe the trend from one county to another in the same region. Referred to INSTAT in 2004 “While 182,600 people moved from one region to another, migration between prefectures [counties] numbers 252,700 people” (INSTAT, 2004: 12).

This phenomenon will introduce demographic concentration and abandonment, not only according to the three regions of the country, but also among different districts of the same region. The four counties that are included in the Great Region and the Middle Region of the country, the counties of Tirana, Durrës, Vlora and Fier dominate in the attraction of internal migrants. INSTAT presents this to us when it underlines that “As far as the host prefectures are concerned, Tirana ranks first, followed by Durrës, Fieri and Vlora” (INSTAT, 2004: 13).

The growth of these counties is also presented by the fact that it is precisely these counties that are also ranked with the lowest level of population loss. As INSTAT would present it “Vlora, Tirana and Durrës have the lowest level of internal outbound migration which represents less than 7% of the total national migration (INSTAT, 2004: 13).

In fact, we can see that there are big growth differences between the Tirana-Durres Region and the Fier-Vlora Region, because “72% of the total number of immigrants live in Tirana and Durrës” (INSTAT, 2004: 13). This dynamic would also be recognized by the World Bank, when it would underline that “Between 1989 and 2001, Tirana and Durrës topped the list of the most populous prefectures/regions that receive migrants, absorbing approximately three quarters of the total flows of internal migration.” (BB, 2007: 4).

And INSTAT would give us more quantitative information about this dominance of Tirana and Durrës counties in relation to the whole country. According to her, between the years 1989-2001, Tirana included more than half of inter-county displacements, or “136,600 migrants from other prefectures”, while Durrës is the second most attractive area and included more than 18% of migrants, or “44,900 immigrants” (INSTAT, 2004: 13-14).

As can be seen from these INSTAT figures, even within the Tirana-Durres Region, Tirana dominates in terms of population growth, because “70% of migrants from Kukësi and Dibra went to Tirana and 20% to Durrës” and that 10% of migrants with residence in Korça district would go to Tirana and only 8% of those who went to Durrës (INSTAT, 2004: 14).

Internal migration within the county as a contributor to the increased level of urbanization and demographic concentration

In the urbanization process of this phase, the tendency of population concentration in the big cities of the country is noticed. According to INSTAT, “Internal migratory movements did not only take place between prefectures [districts], but also between districts of the same prefecture, between municipalities and between villages and the city.” (INSTAT, 2004: 12).

This would produce the result that even within the region, the big cities would be further differentiated from the smaller cities of the same region, in terms of population (Vullnetari, 2007, 2010, 2012). If we refer to Misja and Misja, this phenomenon is presented with population growth in cities with over 50,000 inhabitants, in which 53.6% of the country’s urban population was concentrated in 1989, and at the same time there has been a population decrease in small towns, up to 5,000 inhabitants, where 7.5% of the country’s urban population is concentrated (Misja and Misja, 2004).

In conclusion, it can be said that in the period 1989-2001, only 9 out of 36 districts of the country or 25% of them have a positive balance, while 27 districts or 75% of them have a negative balance in terms of internal migration (INSTAT, 2004). According to INSTAT “in terms of urban migration, Tirana and Durrës received approximately 74% of the total number of migrants.” (INSTAT, 2004: 16) and about 62% of immigrants destined for Durrës and the same number destined for Elbasan have settled in urban areas. (INSTAT, 2004: 15).

But also, another phenomenon that started in this phase of the country’s urbanization from internal migration was the concentration of the population in the centers of the main cities that experienced growth (Faja, 2008; Misja and Misja 2004). INSTAT also recognizes this phenomenon, when it underlines that 252,700 people who have emigrated in their entirety, about 58% or over 146,000 have left rural areas for urban areas (INSTAT, 2004), which has resulted in the densification of the population in cities of host areas.

The phenomenon of population concentration in large urban centers is particularly noticeable in the capital. If we refer to INSTAT “The population of Tirana [city 42 km²] currently increased by 151,500 inhabitants between the two Censuses, that is (41%)” and “2/3 of these internal migrants, that is, (105,000 individuals) live today inside in the city, 1/3 lives in the rural areas of the district of Tirana.” (INSTAT, 2004: 40)

An even earlier definition comes to us from Aliaj and Aliaj in 1998, who would express themselves especially for Tirana, underlining “Only during the period 1990-

1994, the population of Tirana increased from 374,500 to 475,000 inhabitants. In physical terms the city has grown four times more than the total physical development of 40 years during 1945-1985” (IHS alumni, et al., 1998: 102).

Findings and conclusions

In 2001, the number of the population of Albania was 3,069,275 inhabitants, with a significant decrease from 3,282,417 inhabitants in 1989. The water level of demography came as a result of two demographic and social phenomena: (i) external migration, according to which approximately 710,000 Albanians left the country and (ii) the decrease in the fertility rate from 3.3 in 1990 to 2.2 in 2000, as the first contributor to the decrease in natural population growth.

The Albanian society of the first decade of transition was also affected by the phenomenon of internal migration that produced an increase in the level of urbanization in the country. In 2001, compared to 1989, the number of new residential buildings in the urban area increased nearly 2 times, while in the countryside this rate was nearly 4 times lower. This can also be expressed as a percentage, where in urban areas the increase was 87.4%, while in rural areas only 19.4%.

There are two characteristics of urbanization in relation to the housing stock: (i) an average of 6.4 dwellings per 1,000 inhabitants were built, this indicator being higher than the average of 4.1 in the European Union; (ii) the creation of the stock of unoccupied dwellings, to the extent of 9.7% in rural areas compared to 13.1% in urban areas.

One of the important phenomena in the early 90s was the migration of about 1 million Albanians, mainly from rural areas. As a logical consequence, the citizen population increased from 32% to 42% of the country’s total population.

There were two main trends of internal immigration: (i) rural-rural migration that included about 64% of immigrants and was destined mainly to the peri-urban areas of big cities and produced the phenomenon of “rural urbanization”; as well as (ii) rural-urban migration which was expressed in the amount of 36% of immigrants and increased the level and density of the population in the existing urban centers. Both of these contributed to the increase in the level of urbanization of the country, and to the concentration-abandonment imbalance of different regions of the country.

Internal migration will affect the increased level of urbanization and the imbalance of demographic distribution across the national territory, also observed from the inter-regional approach. 182,600 – 355,230 people moved from their region of origin to another, between 1989-2001. Observed from the regional approach: (i) about 91% of inter-regional migrants have moved towards the central

area and the coastal area of the country; and (ii) about 60% of migrants originated in the northern region, 32% in the southern region, and 8% in the central and coastal region.

There were four internal migration trends, of which three in the direction of the central area of the country and specifically in the districts of Tirana and Durrës, and one in the direction of the Western Lowlands and especially in the districts of Vlorë and Fier. The origin of the four lines comes to the extent of 60% from the North, 30% from the South and the rest from the Central/Coastal regions of the country. All four of these lines will further emphasize the imbalance of population distribution, creating: (i) the concentrated region of Tirana-Durres; (ii) the non-partisan Fier-Vlora region; and (iii) the abandoned region that included the other eight districts of the country.

An essential characteristic of this period was internal migration within the region, which also contributed to the increase in the level of urbanization. While 182,600 people moved from one region to another, migration between counties numbers 252,700 people. This phenomenon will introduce population concentration not only according to the three regions of the country, but also among different districts of the same region. The four counties that are included in the Great Region and the Middle Region of the country, the counties of Tirana, Durrës, Vlora and Fier dominate in the attraction of internal migrants.

Internal migration within the county was another characteristic of this period under study. Internal migratory movements did not only take place between counties, but also between cities of the same county, between municipalities and between villages and the city. In the period 1989-2001, in terms of internal migration, only 9 out of 36 districts of the country or 25% of them have a positive balance, while 27 districts or 75% of them have a negative balance.

The phenomenon of population concentration in large urban centers is particularly noticeable in the capital. Only during the period 1990-1994, the population of Tirana increased from 374 thousand to 475 thousand inhabitants. In physical terms, the city has grown four times more than the total physical development of 40 years during 1945-1985. However, for the period 1990-2001, the population of Tirana [city 42 km²]: (i) increased by 151,500 inhabitants (41%); and (ii) 2/3 of these internal migrants, that is, (105,000 individuals) live inside the city, while 1/3 lives in the rural areas of the district of Tirana.

Recommendations

Within its modest limits, the paper recommends more detailed studies on this topic, in the same time period or in other periods along the Albanian transition.

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