

Demographic Dynamics and Characteristics of Urbanization in Albania During the Second Decade of Transition

Next steps in shaping the demographic-territorial model of transition

Dr. Urb. Gentian KAPRATA¹

Abstract

During the second phase of urbanization, 2001-2011, the strong dynamics of the demographic movements that started in the first phase (1990-2001) continued. They include: (i) external migration and (ii) internal migration. The population of Albania decreased by 237,534 inhabitants. There were two reasons for this decline: (i) external migration; and, (ii) the reduction of the natural addition of the population, as a result of the fall of the Synthetic Fertilization Index (ISF). Another demographic phenomenon, very negative, was the aging of the population. During this period, a contradiction appears between: (i) the continuous increase in the number of buildings; and (ii)

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.

rapid population decline. Migration from one district of the northern and southern region to another district in the central and western area of the country included 228,952 individuals, while movements within the same district (at the city and village level) mark a figure of 280,863 individuals. They brought that, for the first time in the history of Albania, the population living in urban areas was higher than the rural one. The Greater Tirana-Durrës Region and the Fier-Vlora Medium Region would follow the division of the general national population, deepening the concentration-dispersion characteristics of the demographic-territorial model in the regional approach. This was also reinforced by the disproportional demographic relationship between the counties of the same region, but specifically in the demographic density between each of the residential centers (municipalities and municipalities) with the national average.

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

Presentation

This paper aims to present and analyze the demographic structure, the level of urbanization and the demographic-territorial model of Albania in the second 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 paper starts with an overview of the level of demography, in the period between 2001-2011. Strong dynamics of demographic movements continued during the second phase of urbanization, including: (i) external migration and (ii) internal migration. The population of Albania suffered a decrease of 237,534 inhabitants, which is 7.7% in these ten years (INSTAT, 2014: 15).

There were two reasons for this decline: (i) external migration, as a result of which, Albania lost something between 480 - 573 thousand people (INSTAT, 2014: 35; INSTAT, 2014: 5); and, (ii) the reduction of the natural increase of the population, as a result of the decline of the IFC from 2.1 in 2001 to 1.6 in 2011 (INSTAT, 2014: 5, 31, 32; INSTAT, 2014: 45). Another demographic phenomenon, very negative, was the aging of the population (INSTAT, 2014: 5).

Further, the paper presents and analyzes the growth of the housing stock as a contributor and indicator in the increase in the level of urbanization and the

concentration-abandonment of the territory by demographics. The paper talks about a contradiction between a continuous increase in the number of buildings by 16.8% and a faster decrease of the population by a figure of 8.8% compared to 2001 (INSTAT, 2014: 10).

The distribution of inhabited dwellings by districts illustrates the concentration of new buildings, showing a construction boom in Tirana, Vlora, Durrës and Fier (INSTAT, 2014: 14). The phenomenon of uninhabited houses or for secondary use also proves this demographic and urbanistic phenomenon (INSTAT, 2014: 12-13).

The two basic trends of internal migration (rural-rural, rural-urban) as a contributor to the increased level of urbanization and concentration of demography, will be dealt with further in the paper. Migration from one county in the northern and southern region to another county in the central and western area of the country included 228,952 individuals, who make up 8% of the resident population in 2011, while movements at the city and village level mark a figure of 280,863 individuals. (INSTAT, 2014: 12).

Both trends of internal migration brought for the first time in the history of Albania: (i) the population living in urban areas was higher than the rural one, and included something between 1,498,508 - 1,642,359 inhabitants or about 54-58.2% of the total number of the population: (ii) while in rural areas live something between 1,301,630-1,179,618 inhabitants or about 46-41,8% of the total number of the population (INSTAT, 2011, 2014; INSTAT, 2014: 23).

In the following, the paper analyzes internal migration from the inter-regional approach as a contributor to the increase in the level of urbanization and the concentration-abandonment of the territory by demography. The Tirana-Durrës Greater Region and the Fier-Vlora Medium Region would follow the domination of the total national population. Specifically, Tirana would be inhabited by 670,553 urban residents and 86,375 rural residents, with an urbanization level of 88.6%; Durrës from 198,749 urban residents and 64,938 rural residents, with an urbanization level of 75.4%; and Vlora from 99,812 urban residents and 81,576 rural residents, with an urbanization level of 55.0% (INSTAT, 2014: 31). Likewise, the northern and southern districts have recorded a population loss of up to 60% (Vullnetari, 2012: 96).

Internal migration within the region as a contributor to the increase in the level of urbanization and concentration - the abandonment of the territory by demography, is the issue addressed below. The fact that about 18% of the migrants who come to the Fier district originate from the Vlora district (INSTAT, 2014: 22), testifies to the impact of internal migration on the urban concentration of the Fier district compared to the Vlora district, although both belong to the same region.

A demographic situation, but on a larger scale, also occurs within the Tirana-Durres region. Two were that shaped these phenomena: (i) terrible with the trend

from Durrës to Tirana, which migrates 5-10% of all the growth that Tirana has experienced; and (ii) the different levels of host migration between the two districts (INSTAT, 2014: 22). In this sense, Tirana marked the increase with 112,180 new residents, while Durrës with 34,059 new residents, or in other words 49% of migrants settled in Tirana, 15% in Durrës (INSTAT, 2014: 19, 22; Vullnetari, 2012: 61).

In the following, the paper presents and analyzes the internal migration within the district as a contributor to the increase in the level of urbanization and the concentration-abandonment of the territory by demographics. This is distinguished by the fact that of the 373 municipalities and municipalities in the country, 48 of them, in the northern and southern parts of the country, have lost more than half of their population (INSTAT, 2014: 12; Vullnetari 2007, 2010, 2012). Likewise, if the population density in the national context was 97 inhabitants/km², the counties of Tirana and Durrës present respective densities of 454 inhabitants/km² and 343 inhabitants/km², while Gjirokastra 25 inhabitants/km², Kukësi 36 inhabitants/km² and Korça 59 inhabitants/km² (INSTAT, 2014: 17).

Punimi mbyllet me disa gjetje dhe konkluzione, si dhe disa rekomandime modeste.

The purpose and methodology of the work

The first aim of this paper is to collect data regarding the population level (demography), the housing stock, the level of urbanization and internal demographic movements during the period 2001-2011 (the second 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 paper is based on the analytical one, which is foreseen as the most appropriate 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, 2001-2011

The strong dynamics of demographic movements continued during the second phase of urbanization, 2001-2011. They expressed the same forms as in the first phase (1990-2001), including: (i) external migration and (ii) internal migration.

The population of Albania decreased by 237,534 inhabitants in the second decade of transition, from 3,069,275 inhabitants in 2001 (INSTAT, 2001, 2003, 2004) to 2,831,741 inhabitants in 2011 (INSTAT, 2014: 15). This figure is expressed as 7.7% in these ten years (INSTAT, 2014: 15), which is even higher than the decrease of about 7% in the first ten years of the transition.

Thus, in the first two decades of the transition, Albania lost about 15% of its population, as the main consequence of external migration but also the decrease in the natural increase of the population. If we refer only to external migration, we can say that referring to INSTAT “the number of immigrants for the period 2001-2011 is calculated over 480,000 people.” (INSTAT, 2014: 35).

A higher figure will be given by INSTAT in its study *‘Population and its dynamics’* in 2014. According to it, “even 573 thousand more people left the country than entered it” (INSTAT, 2014: 5). However, external migration “is one of the main reasons for the decrease in the number of the population in Albania in the period between 2001 and 2011.” (INSTAT, 2014: 31).

The population in this decade is also due to the decline in the natural growth of the population, especially in terms of the decrease in the fertility rate. If we refer to INSTAT if in the first decade “... the child per woman index speaks of a downward trend from 3.3 in 1990 to 2.2 in 2000” (INSTAT, 2004: 32), “Until 2011, the ISF [Synthetic Index of Fertilization] had dropped to 1.6.” (INSTAT, 2014: 5).

This is a figure that does not replace the population, and explained and analyzed by INSTAT, in its study *‘Population and its dynamics’*, it can be said that:

“The fertility rate in Albania is significantly lower than the replacement rate, i.e. the average number of children a woman would have to give birth to in order to replace herself by giving birth to a girl who should live to her reproductive age. The replacement level value is roughly the ISF value of 2.1.” (INSTAT, 2014: 45)

The decrease in the level of natural growth, as a result of the decrease in the ISF, is also noticeable in comparison with other European countries. If we refer to INSTAT:

“In fact, in recent years it has also dropped from the top 10 countries for birth rates in Europe. Only four countries in Europe have fertility rates of more than 2 children per woman: Turkey, Ireland, Iceland and France. Albania now has a lower birth rate than some Western European countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom and some Northern countries such as Norway, Finland and Sweden.” (INSTAT, 2014: 48)

As in the first decade, the population experienced its aging in this period as well. Referring to the same INSTAT study, “In the same period, the share of children under 15 years of age fell sharply from 33.4 to 20.7 percent. At the same time, the share of elderly people (65 years and older) increased from 5.3 to 11.3 percent.” (INSTAT, 2014: 5). The aging of the population is a negative demographic phenomenon, among others, in relation to its impact on natural population growth (Vullnetari, 2007, 2012)

Both of these demographic phenomena: (i) the decline in the level of natural growth; and (ii) external migration, are also very important in their impact on the level of urbanization, since there is a strong connection between the types of migration between them (King and Vullnetari, 2003; Vullnetari, 2007: 69-70), but in this article we will focus on internal migration, which is the main and direct reason for the growth and changes in urbanization.

The increase in the stock of buildings and housing as a contributor to the increase in the level of urbanization and the concentration - abandonment of the territory by demography

The period 2001-2011 is characterized by the same internal and external migration trends as the previous period. As Vullnetari would emphasize in 2012, “Internal and external migration on a large scale have profoundly reformatted the population distribution map of Albania” (Vullnetari, 2012: 95).

The population continued to migrate in two directions, as (i) leaving Albania to other western countries, but also (ii) leaving the settlements of origin to other areas of Albania (Vullnetari, 2012: 70, 93; INSTAT, 2011, 2013, 2014). INSTAT would underline that “In particular, internal migration brought a large-scale urbanization of some areas and a drastic depopulation of some others” (INSTAT, 2014: 12).

We will first see this very harmful urban phenomenon in relation to the dynamics of the development of the apartment during the time taken in the study. In the first decade, the increase in residential spaces has served to improve the surface indicator, serving to correct the low level of housing in socialism (IHS alumni, et al., 1998; Aliaj, 2008; Misja and Misja, 2004). This phenomenon would also be accepted by INSTAT, according to which “During the cycle of the previous Census [1989-2001], there was an increase of 32.8% in the number of dwellings and a decrease of 3.6% in the population, which can have been indicators of the improvement of living conditions.” (INSTAT, 2014: 10).

The second decade would not justify the argument that the increase in the number of residential buildings comes as a response to the need to increase the housing rate indicator. The data show that the phenomenon of unoccupied housing would further strengthen in this decade. Referring to INSTAT, it can be said that: “Uninhabited dwellings in 2011 constitute about 21.7% of the total number of dwellings in Albania, compared to only 11.3% in 2001.” (INSTAT, 2014: 12).

A new phenomenon observed in this decade is the creation of a housing stock for seasonal use, which at least for a long period of time remains unoccupied. According to INSTAT “Eight percent of buildings and dwellings are for secondary purposes and for seasonal use, which means that the number of unoccupied dwellings has increased faster than people’s demand or their ability to buy them.” (INSTAT, 2014: 13).

This fact proves that construction did not address the need for improving housing indicators, but for a redistribution of the population across the national territory. The argument that “In 2011, there was a continuous increase in the number of buildings by 16.8% and a faster decrease in the population by a figure of 8.8% compared to 2001.” (INSTAT, 2014: 10), is another indicator of the strengthening of the model of concentration-abandonment of the territory by the population.

The distribution structure of new buildings shows the strengthening of the population concentration pattern in the four main districts of the country. INSTAT would also identify this phenomenon, when it emphasized that “The distribution of inhabited dwellings according to districts illustrates this situation in the country, showing a construction boom in Tirana, Vlorë and Durrës”, and that “The concentration of inhabited dwellings in the area extended area of Tirana represents more than a quarter of the overall distribution of inhabited dwellings in the country, followed by Durrës, Fieri” (INSTAT, 2014: 14), which are the four districts of the Great Region and the Region of Middle of the model.

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

In the second decade of transition (2001-2011) the directions of internal migration continued to be in the two directions defined in the first period 1989-2001, (i) migration from one county to another and (ii) within the same county from rural areas to urban areas (Vullnetari, 2012: 93; King, 2010).

Migration from one district of the northern and southern region to another district in the central and western area of the country involved 228,952 individuals, which constitute 8% of the resident population in 2011 (INSTAT, 2014: 12). But also according to the other trend, from rural areas to urban areas within the same county, internal migration presents high numbers. INSTAT will also notice this phenomenon, according to which “Movements at the city and village level, in the same period, mark a figure of 280,863 individuals” (INSTAT, 2014: 12).

Both trends of internal migration, but especially the second one, brought about the reversal of the urban-rural ratio in Albania. For the first time in the history of Albania: (i) the population living in urban areas was higher than the rural one, and includes 1,498,508 inhabitants or about 54% of the total population: (ii) while 1,301,630 live in rural areas inhabitants or about 46% of the total population (INSTAT, 2011, 2013, 2014).

The percentage of the urban population is higher if we refer to the study ‘*A new urban-rural classification of the Albanian population*’, of INSTAT in 2014. This study used the methodology used by the European Union and came to the conclusion that “The urban population of the Census, (including rejections) calculated with this methodology is 1,642,359 inhabitants (58.2%), while the rural population is 1,179,618 inhabitants (41.8%).” (INSTAT, 2014: 23).

However, the dynamics of internal migration in the second decade of transition overturned the characteristic of the rural dominance of the Albanian population, and for the first time, more than half of the Albanian population lives in cities. If we refer to INSTAT in the report ‘*Housing and living conditions*’ we can quote that “The distribution by place of residence shows that there was an increase in the percentage of inhabited dwellings in urban areas of 24.7% and a decrease in rural areas of 20.5%.” (INSTAT, 2014: 14).

This fact, empirically measured by the INSTAT report, confirms the theoretical conclusion that the level of urbanization in transition Albania is growing at a high speed as a result of the reduction of the rural population compared to the urban one. Referring to the housing stock, 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).

The phenomenon of increasing the level of urbanization is also distinguished according to the indicators of housing construction. Referred to INSTAT “As a result [of new housing construction], the total stock of housing in Albania has increased, and the concentration of housing units between rural and urban areas has changed” (INSTAT, 2014: 10). This is also distinguished in relation to unoccupied dwellings, because “the number of unoccupied buildings in 2011 in rural areas is higher than that of buildings in urban areas (24.6% against 19.0%)” (INSTAT, 2014: 13).

The concentric characteristic of the demographic-territorial model is also identified by the fact that “Tirana remains the largest host of internal migration, and as a result, the construction boom has occurred in the city and its suburbs.” (INSTAT, 2014: 14). As in the first decade (IHS alumni, et al., 1998; Aliaj, 2008; Misja and Misja, 2004), also in the period under study, Tirana is accepting internal migrants, further densifying the city and “urbanizing rural” (Fuga, 2012) of its surroundings.

Internal migration from the inter-regional approach as a contributor to the increase in the level of urbanization and concentration - abandonment of the territory by demography

The acceleration of urbanization rates as a result of internal migration is not only discernible from the observation according to the three regions of the country: the Tirana-Durrës Greater Region, which includes the counties of Tirana and Durrës; Fier-Vlora Middle Region, which includes Fier and Vlora counties; and, the Abandoned Region, which includes the other eight counties of the country. In addition to the flows from the northern and southern regions to the central region, internal migration is also clearly visible at the county level (Vullnetari, 2010, 2012; INSTAT, 2014: Kaprata, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023).

Observed from both levels, both from the level of regions and from the level of districts, internal migration would emphasize the differences between the three components of the territorial model, which had been outlined since the first decade of transition (Vullnetari, 2012: 95; King, 2010). This dynamic would also be distinguished by INSTAT in 2014, when it underlined that “In particular, internal migration brought a large-scale urbanization of some areas and a drastic depopulation of some others” (INSTAT, 2014: 12).

Thus, the Tirana-Durrës Greater Region and the Fier-Vlora Medium Region would continue to dominate the general national population, due to the incoming internal migration that they suffered in this second phase of urbanization. Referring to Table 5.8 ‘Urban population based on the network of cells according to NUTS 3 regions in Albania’, of the study ‘A new urban-rural classification of the Albanian population’, it would underline that “Tirana, 670,553 urban inhabitants, 86,375 rural inhabitants, 88.6% urbanization”; “Durrës, 198,749 urban residents, 64,938 rural residents, 75.4% urbanization”; “Vlora, 99,812 urban residents, 81,576 rural residents, 55.0% urbanization”; (INSTAT, 2014: 31).

This demographic phenomenon can be distinguished from the differences in the level of urbanization of each district separately. If the ratio of the urban population to the total population, expressed as a percentage in the national dimension, is presented at 53.52%, the districts that make up the two main components of the territorial model, have this ratio more pronounced, for example, Durres 74.56%, Tirana 70.20% and Vlora 65.62% (INSTAT, 2014). This is the result of internal migration in the central part of Albania, where incoming flows predominate, and “most internal migrants are concentrated in Tirana and Durrës.” (INSTAT, 2014: 19).

In contrast to the first phase of urbanization, in the second phase an increase in the absolute value of internal migration to Tirana and its surrounding villages “especially from Vlora and Fieri” can be seen (INSTAT, 2014: 16). This migratory phenomenon would further deepen the concentrating characteristic of the territorial model in the population ratio in its two main components, the Tirana-Durrës Greater Region and the Fier-Vlorë Middle Region. Although these two regions represent parts of the national territory where the population is concentrated, they begin to deepen the difference between them, presenting the Tirana-Durrës Greater Region as the only one that dominates the spatial structure of the country (Kaprata, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023).

The characteristic of ‘abandonment’ of the national territory, which together with the characteristic of ‘concentration’ constitute the essence of the territorial model of transition, was deepened even more in this phase of the country’s urbanization. All eight counties that represent this characteristic have suffered a loss of population in this period as well, which has generally gone in the direction of the Tirana-Durra Greater Region (Kaprata, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023).

Internal migrants who came to Tirana, in the period 2001-2011, mostly belonged to the districts of this component of the territorial model. As expressed by INSTAT “19% came from Dibra, 12% from Kukësi and Fieri and 5-10% from Shkodra, Berat, Durres, Elbasan, Gjirokastra, Korça, while less than 5% came from Lezha and Vlora” (INSTAT, 2014: 22). Similarly, for the district of Durres, which is the other district of the Tirana-Durres Greater Region, it can be said that

the majority of internal migrants who arrived in Durres “came from Dibra (30 percent), Elbasan (14 percent) and Kukësi (11 percent).” (INSTAT, 2014: 22).

This testifies to a great loss of the population of other districts of the country in favor of Tirana and Durrës, and in this sense the deepening of the phenomenon of the abandonment of these districts by the resident population. This phenomenon would also be recognized by Voluntari when he pointed out that “some northern and southern counties have recorded population losses of up to 60%, generally due to migration” (Vullnetari, 2012: 96).

Observed from a macro approach, the flows of population displacement originate from the northern districts, where the districts of the northeast of the country stand out, but also the districts of the south-central and southeastern part, the numbers end up towards the two districts of the center of the country (INSTAT, 2014: 19). The abandonment of these districts by the population is very pronounced in this phase of urbanism, but what stands out are “the districts of Dibra, Kukes and Gjirokastra, where more than 21 percent of their population left during the period 2001-2011 ” (INSTAT, 2014: 19).

Likewise, Fieri seems to be an attractive district for internal migrants who come mainly from “Berati (19 percent), Vlora (18 percent), Gjirokastra (15 percent) and Elbasani (13 percent)” (INSTAT, 2014: 22). The district of Fier, together with that of Vlora, have attracted internal migrants from other districts of the country, contributing to their abandonment, and in this sense to the strengthening of the territorial ‘abandonment’ characteristic of the country’s territorial model.

Internal migration within the region as a contributor to the increase in the level of urbanization and concentration - abandonment of the territory by demography

The Tirana-Durres Greater Region, which dominates the spatial structure of the country in terms of population level, underwent internal dynamics during this urbanization phase (Vullnetari, 2012: 96). This dynamic is presented with a deepening of the difference between the resident population in the two counties that make it up.

There were two dynamics that shaped this phenomenon: (i) first, we have an internal migration with a trend from Durrës to Tirana, which represents 5-10% of the entire population growth that Tirana has suffered from incoming migration; and (ii) secondly, we have different levels of host migration between the two counties (INSTAT, 2014: 22). This is because Tirana recorded a higher increase, with 112,180 new residents coming from other regions of Albania, than Durrës with 34,059 new residents, or in other words “49 percent of internal migrants settled in Tirana, while 15 percent in Durres.” (INSTAT, 2014: 19).

In fact, Tirana is the dominant district in terms of the number of incoming migrants (Vulnetari, 2012: 61), with 58% of all internal migrants, surpassing even itself a decade ago because “this [figure] is 9 points higher percentage compared to the period from 2001 to 2011.” (INSTAT, 2014: 22). This was presented very clearly by INSTAT when it underlined that “Even though internal movements are multidimensional, it is obvious that the vast majority of internal migration flows are concentrated towards Tirana.” (INSTAT, 2014: 12).

But also the Fier-Vlora Middle Region, apart from losing population as a result of out-migration to Tirana (King, 2010; Vullnetari, 2012), presents its internal dynamics. About 18% of the migrants who come to the Fier district are originally from the Vlora district (INSTAT, 2014: 22).

This phenomenon has been studied by INSTAT in the study ‘*Migration in Albania*’, which has defined a new instrument that explains it. This instrument is called by INSTAT the “movement rate” and is an indicator that expresses to what extent the population of a county is affected by migration in both directions. INSTAT would present that “The values of this measurement are high, if a large part of the population leaves the county, or if a large part of the population has arrived during the last decade, or if both occur simultaneously in a county certain” (INSTAT, 2014: 18).

This instrument explains why the same districts are presented both as districts that have lost population and as districts that have gained population, as a result of internal migration. This comes as a result of the fact that the internal migration dynamics affect all districts in both directions, i.e. both in the outgoing and incoming direction of the population.

This indicator also proves the two formative characteristics of the territorial model of the country, ‘concentration’ and ‘abandonment’. Referring to INSTAT “The highest values in Albania [of the movement rate] can be found in Dibër, with 30.4 percent, Kukës with 29.4 percent, Gjirokastër with 25.3 percent and Berat with 20.7 percent”, and the lowest values in “Tirana with 16.6 percent and Durrës with 16.9 percent” (INSTAT, 2014: 18). Which reflects in a different way the emphasis that the Greater Region is receiving, and in particular the district of Tirana.

Internal migration within the district as a contributor to the increase in the level of urbanization and concentration - abandonment of the territory by demography

Acceleration of the rates of urbanization in the country due to massive displacements of the population within the national territory, apart from the inter-regional and inter-district point of view, are also distinct from the point of view

of the local administrative units. Referring to INSTAT, “Out of 373 municipalities and municipalities in the country, 48 of them have lost more than half of their population in the period 2001-2011” (INSTAT, 2014: 12).

This means that, while the vast majority of municipalities and communes have lost population due to internal migration, the resident population of about 13% of them has been halved. In fact, “These 48 municipalities/communes are mainly located in the center of the northern and southern parts of the country” (INSTAT, 2014: 12), a finding that proves the deepening of differences even between the second-level local government units.

This phenomenon presents us with another characteristic of the territorial model of the concentration-abandonment of the territory by the population, which is the densification of the population in the most important municipalities and communes of the respective districts. So, even the districts that have experienced population growth, but also the districts that have suffered population loss, have faced an internal urbanization dynamic that has brought a concentrated distribution of the population in the center of the districts (Vullnetari, 2007, 2010, 2012).

This generally comes as a result of the migratory trend within the same district, from rural areas to urban areas, but there are cases when the migration trend from one district to another also contributes, as is the case of the county of Tirana that we will present below.

In fact, as INSTAT presents it, “the more detailed the administrative division [for which the phenomenon of internal migration is observed], the higher the migration rate” (INSTAT, 2014: 12), which means that the characteristics of concentration expressed at the level of administrative units through population densification and intensification of buildings is more significant.

To remain at the district level, we can say that the difference between the districts that make up the formative components of the territorial model is also distinguished in terms of the density of inhabitants in the unit of territorial surface under their jurisdiction. If the population density in the national context, according to the measurements made by the ‘*Population and Housing Census 2011*’, was 97 inhabitants/km², the counties of Tirana and Durrës present densities much higher than this indicator, with respective densities of 454 inhabitants/km² and 343 inhabitants/km² (INSTAT, 2014: 17).

The same phenomenon also applies to the ‘abandoned’ districts, such as Gjirokastër, Dibër, Kukës, Korçë and Shkodër, which are represented at very low levels of population density per unit area. Some examples to make this statement concrete are Gjirokastra with a level of 25 inhabitants/km², Kukësi 36 inhabitants/km² and Korça 59 inhabitants/km² (INSTAT, 2014: 17).

As we presented, the densification of the population in the central administrative units of the districts is a phenomenon that affects all the districts of the country.

This phenomenon, for most districts, occurs as a result of internal migration within the same district because the vast majority of communes have lost their population as a result of their departure to urban centers. The communes of suburban Tirana makes exceptions to this widespread phenomenon (INSTAT, 2014:15).

The communes around urban Tirana have not only not suffered a population decline, but have continued to grow during this urbanization phase (Vullnetari, 2007, 2012; INSTAT, 2014). Many authors have distinguished and presented this phenomenon, from IHS Alumni in 1998, Faja in 2003, Misja and Misja in 2004, Aliaj in 2008, Fuga in 2012, the World Bank in 2007, but we will remain at the studies published by INSTAT, because this is the only way we remain in the quantitative field.

According to INSTAT, this phenomenon originates from the fact that internal migrants tend to move as close as possible to the desired destination. Due to many economic and governance factors, it has been impossible for many migrants to settle in the city of Tirana (Aliaj, 2007; Fuga, 2012), they have settled in the six surrounding municipalities, such as Kamza, Pakuqani, and Farka, which are the communes that have experienced the highest population growth (INSTAT, 2004, 2014).

Referring to the study '*Migration in Albania 2014*', the communes around Tirana have had the highest population growth in the period 2001-2011, while the population of Farka, Dajti and Kashari has tripled (INSTAT, 2014: 15). If we consider the region of origin of the internal immigrants who arrive in the six communes around Tirana, we see that most of them come from the north and northeast of Albania, more precisely from Kukësi and Dibra. Referring to numbers, this statement is presented with 39% of migrants who came to the six communes in question came from Kukësi, while 34% of them came from Dibra (INSTAT, 2014: 15).

On the other hand, it is noted that the communes of Kashari and Farka are preferred by internal migrants coming from the southern districts (INSTAT, 2014: 16), while internal migrants coming from the northern districts prefer the municipalities of Kamza and Paskuqani (INSTAT , 2014: 16). For example, 44% of migrants moving from Kukësi settle in Kamëz, while 61% of migrants coming from Gjirokastra settle in Kashar (INSTAT, 2014: 17).

Communes such as Dajti, Farka and Kashari that attract migrants with residential origins from the southern regions have experienced an increase in the number of inhabitants only during the decade 2001-2011. In fact, Farka still experienced population loss in the period 1989-2001 (INSTAT, 2014: 16). These figures measured empirically by INSTAT present the fact that Tirana has not only grown and densified in its urban area but also in its rural territories.

Findings and conclusions

Strong dynamics of demographic movements continued during the second phase of urbanization, 2001-2011, including: (i) external migration and (ii) internal migration. The population of Albania suffered a decrease of 237,534 inhabitants, which is 7.7% in these ten years.

There were two reasons for this decline: (i) external migration, as a result of which, Albania lost something between 480 - 573 thousand people; and, (ii) the reduction of the natural addition of the population, as a result of the fall of the SFI from 2.1 in 2001 to 1.6 in 2011. Another demographic phenomenon, very negative, was the aging of the population.

During this period, a contradiction appears between: (i) a continuous increase in the number of buildings by 16.8%; and (ii) a more rapid decrease of the population with a figure of 8.8% compared to 2001. The distribution of inhabited dwellings according to districts, illustrates the concentration of new buildings, showing a construction boom in Tirana, Vlorë, Durrës and Fern. The phenomenon of uninhabited houses or for secondary use also proves these two demographic and urbanistic phenomena.

Migration from one district of the northern and southern region to another district in the central and western area of the country involved 228,952 individuals, who make up 8% of the resident population in 2011, while movements at the city and village level mark a figure of 280,863 individuals.

Both trends of internal migration brought for the first time in the history of Albania: (i) the population living in urban areas was higher than the rural one, and included something between 1,498,508 - 1,642,359 inhabitants or about 54- 58.2% of the total number of the population: (ii) while in the rural areas live something between 1,301,630-1,179,618 inhabitants or about 46-41.8% of the total number of the population. The concentric characteristic of the demographic-territorial model is also identified by the fact that Tirana remains the largest host of internal migration.

The Tirana-Durrës Greater Region and the Fier-Vlora Medium Region would follow the domination of the total national population. Specifically, Tirana would be inhabited by 670,553 urban residents and 86,375 rural residents, with an urbanization level of 88.6%; Durrës from 198,749 urban residents and 64,938 rural residents, with an urbanization level of 75.4%; and Vlora from 99,812 urban residents and 81,576 rural residents, with an urbanization level of 55.0%. Likewise, northern and southern counties have recorded population losses of up to 60%.

Internal migration within the region as a contributor to the increase in the level of urbanization and concentration - the abandonment of the territory by

demography, is the issue addressed below. The fact that about 18% of the migrants who come to the Fier district are originally from the Vlora district, testifies to the impact of internal migration on the urban concentration of the Fier district compared to the Vlora district, although both belong to the same region.

The same demographic situation, but on a larger scale, also occurs within the Tirana-Durrës region. There were two dynamics that shaped this phenomenon: (i) internal migration with a trend from Durrës to Tirana, which represents 5-10% of the entire population growth that Tirana has experienced; and (ii) different levels of host migration between the two districts. In this sense, Tirana recorded an increase with 112,180 new residents, while Durrës with 34,059 new residents, or in other words, 49% of migrants settled in Tirana, while 15% in Durrës.

Internal migration within the district as a contributor to the concentration-abandonment of the territory by demographics is distinguished by the fact that out of 373 municipalities and communes in the country, 48 of them, from the northern and southern parts of the country, have lost more than half of the population. Likewise, if the population density in the national context was 97 inhabitants/km², the districts of Tirana and Durrës present respective densities of 454 inhabitants/km² and 343 inhabitants/km², while Gjirokastra 25 inhabitants/km², Kukësi 36 inhabitants/km² and Korça 59 inhabitants/km².

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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