

Working Paper
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Migration and Development in Albania

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1. Introduction

Starting in 1990, Albania has witnessed one of the great emigrations of recent times; ten years later at least 600,000 Albanians, one in five of the population, were living abroad, mainly in Greece and Italy. An equally significant, but less well-documented internal redistribution of the population has taken place over the same time frame. This paper¹ chronicles and interprets this multiple mass migration; it concludes by identifying important gaps in the research literature and some hypotheses and questions for future work. The paper is in several parts. Following this introduction, the second part describes the political, demographic, economic and cultural background of Albania's post-communist transition, highlighting the key determinants of migration. The third and fourth parts look at Albanian international and internal migration respectively: topics covered include the chronology of movement, a review of the available statistics, and the geographical distribution of the migrants. In the fifth part of the paper we examine, within the constraints of the evidence available, the socio-economic impacts of migration. For internal migration this includes the hyper-rapid growth of the main Tirana-Durrës urban axis, coupled with rural depopulation, especially in the mountainous regions of the north and south of the country. For external migration, depopulation is again an important issue; but equally vital are the effects of remittances on the home country, at a variety of levels, together with the prospects for return migration and the developmental impulse that this might bring. Finally, we point to key gaps in the literature on Albanian migration and development, and from this identify some future research agendas.

The single most important background context for Albanian migration was the collapse of the communist or state-socialist regimes in Eastern Europe after 1989. The dismantling of the Iron Curtain was widely anticipated to be a precursor of a mass migration, given that emigration had been denied for so long, and reflecting the obvious economic divide between East and West (Layard *et al.* 1992). By and large, however, this apocalyptic view failed to materialise.

The major exception to this muted East–West migration, and the focus of this paper, has been Albania. Within the three years 1991–93, a mass flight of perhaps 200,000–300,000 Albanians took place, seeking refuge and work abroad, the overwhelming majority in Greece and Italy, Albania's richest neighbours (see Figure 1). By the end of the decade, there were thought to be 800,000 Albanians living abroad (Barjaba 2000), an estimate which was revised to 600,000 when the

¹ Parts of this paper draw on already -published work by one of the authors – see King (2003); King and Mai (2002); King, Mai and Dalipaj (2003).

results of the 2001 census became known (INSTAT 2002). These are rough estimates, as we shall see later, but broadly they are of the right order of magnitude. Much of the movement has been chaotic, clandestine and hence poorly recorded. But there is no doubting the overall scale of the Albanian exodus: perhaps no country in the world has been so deeply affected by emigration in the last fifteen years (King 2003: 284).

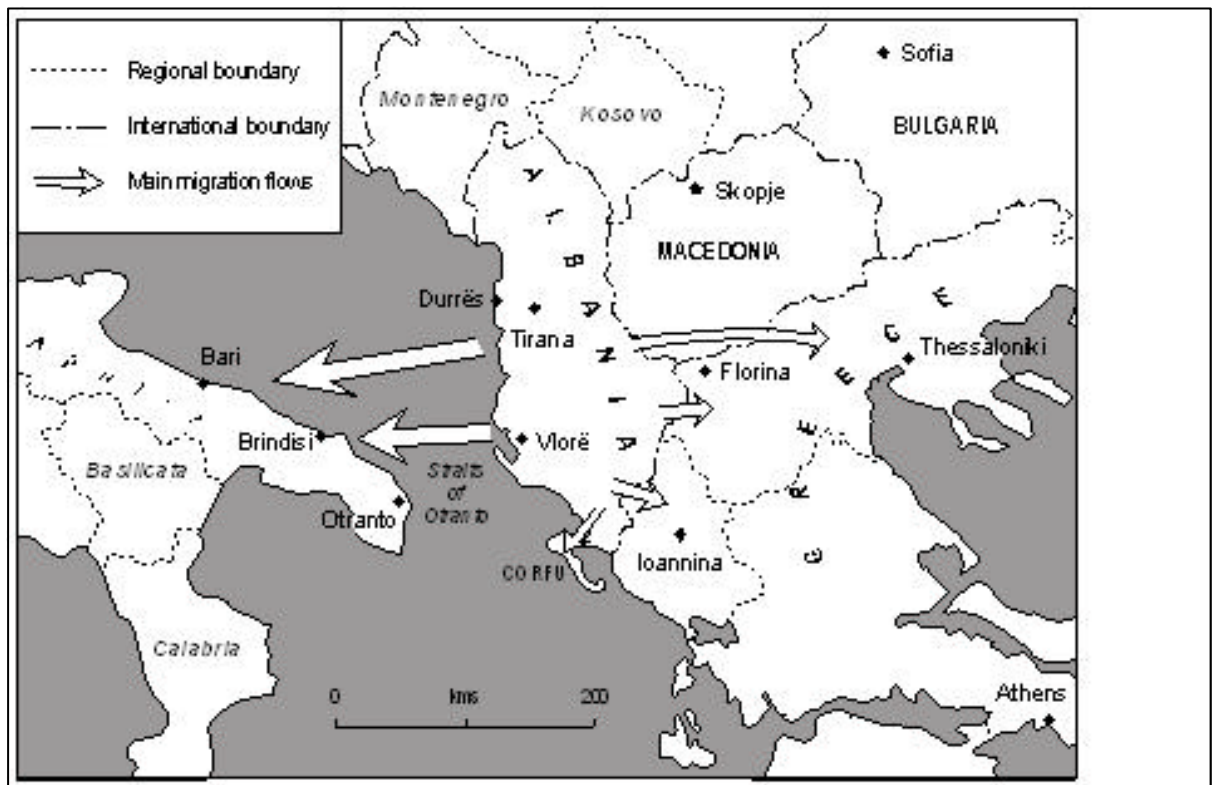


Figure1: Albania and its Neighbours: Main Migration Routes

From the account presented in the following sections of this report, emigration from Albania can be seen as a response to a number of features in Albanian politics, demography, economy and culture. Above all, it has been a strategy of pure economic survival for those individuals and households who had suffered most in the chaotic transition from communism and who were left bereft of income-earning opportunities and social support structures (De Soto *et al.* 2002; Kule *et al.* 2002). Additionally, it could be seen as a means of self-realisation for many younger people, whose ideas and ambitions continued to be frustrated in the land of their birth; as the achievement of the long-denied right to migrate; and as a gesture of political protest against a sequence of authoritarian political figures who, in some respects, represented more a continuity than a break with the country's political past (Mai 2002a).

2. Background to Migration

Albania gained its independence from Ottoman rule in 1912 and was internationally recognised when it joined the League of Nations in 1920. The years until World War Two were dominated by the conservative leadership of Ahmed Bey Zogu, first as president (1925–28), then as King Zog (until 1939). Zog's dictatorial rule was marked by economic stagnation, although he helped create a modern school system and the country became more stable. Zog failed, however, to resolve the question of land reform, and the peasantry remained impoverished (Vickers 1995: 124-126).

During the later years of Zog's rule, Italy exercised increasing influence over Albanian affairs so that the country was already *de facto* an Italian protectorate by the time that Italy invaded in 1939 (Mai 2003). Albania remained under Italian occupation until 1943, when German forces took it after the Italian surrender. During the war, nationalists, communists and monarchists in Albania resisted the German and Italian occupation with varying degrees of zeal and effectiveness. The nationalists and monarchists were least committed in this, so the communists eventually prevailed, seizing power and ousting the Germans in November 1944. Enver Hoxha was installed as the country's new leader, a position he held, with absolute and commanding authority, until his death in 1985. The Hoxha regime launched a radical reform programme that destroyed the power of the landlords, nationalised all industry, banks and commercial properties, and created a state-controlled socialist society.

Under Enver Hoxha, leader of the Albanian Party of Labour from 1941 until his death in 1985, Albania experienced one of the most oppressive and isolated communist regimes in the world. Economic and political contacts with other countries, even communist ones, decreased to a minimum as Albania broke first with the Soviet bloc in 1961, and then with China in 1977. Free movement of population was a non-existent concept: attempted emigration was regarded as an act of treason, punished by death or lengthy imprisonment, and internal mobility was also tightly controlled. A high-voltage fence, with frequent sentry-posts, ran the entire length of the land border with Greece and the former Yugoslavia. The militarisation of the Albanian landscape was completed by 600,000 mushroom-shaped concrete bunkers scattered throughout the territory. Most of the population was fixed in rural areas providing labour for collectivised agriculture; the towns were centres of basic services or industry. Everywhere walls were covered in slogans exalting and exhorting self-reliance. According to Hall (1996a), Albania in the 1980s was unique in Europe for having a rural population which was still growing in absolute terms and which

accounted for two-thirds of the total population, and for experiencing most of its urban growth by natural increase rather than through rural-urban migration. In fact, through most of the communist period Tirana, the capital, accounted for a decreasing share of total population in Albania (Carter 1986).

2.1 The Political Background to the Albanian Exodus

The origins of the Albanian exodus of the early 1990s lie in the domino effect of democratisation throughout Eastern Europe in those years, and in the severe political and economic chaos that the country suffered as an accompaniment to liberalisation.

Copying what they had seen happen in East Germany, in the summer of 1990 around 5,000 Albanians 'invaded' Western embassies in Tirana and were given exile in various EU countries. By scaling the walls of the embassy compounds and accessing foreign sovereign territory, albeit within their own country, Albanians were taking the first symbolic step towards asserting their long-denied right to emigrate. The lessons of the embassy crisis were not lost on the Albanian government, led since Hoxha's death by the cautious reformer Ramiz Alia. The issuing of passports was liberalised, allowing a small-scale exodus to continue for the next few months.

The next act of the 'Albanian drama' occurred in March 1991 in the run-up to Albania's first democratic elections (in which the Communist Party won two-thirds of the seats, based on its strength in rural areas). As political chaos threatened and the economy collapsed, 25,000 Albanians commandeered boats of all kinds and headed across the Straits of Otranto to Apulia, the closest region in Southern Italy (Figure 1). Caught unawares, the Italian authorities prevaricated. The Albanians were kept waiting on the quays at Brindisi and in military accommodation for some days before the Italian government decided to accept them (King and Mai, 2002: 164-167).

A second exodus of 20,000 Albanian 'boat people' in August 1991 was allowed to land in Italy but most were eventually repatriated, the Italian government taking the view that, since democratic elections had taken place at the end of March in Albania, these migrants could not be accepted as political refugees (dell'Agnese 1996). Italy was also aware of its obligations under the Schengen accords, and of concern on the part of its EU partners that the Mediterranean coasts of the Community be protected from mass migratory incursions. Meanwhile, new elections in Albania in March 1992 brought the Democrats under Sali Berisha to power in an exact reversal of the 1991 election result.

After the dramatic events of 1991, accompanied by the 'double exodus' to Italy and a larger but less-well documented migration to Greece, there was hope of a more prosperous and quiescent political future for Albania. Berisha was seen as a social and political reformer and the West heavily subsidised the ailing economy. During 1993–96 the country appeared to make striking economic progress; and some emigrants were returning and investing in their home country. The percentage change in real GDP exceeded 9 percent in every year during the four years 1993-96 inclusive (Korovilas 1998: 2). However, although the economy stabilised, it was clearly not able to supply enough jobs for all of Albania's active population, especially the 70,000 young people annually entering the labour market. By the mid-1990s, approximately 20 percent of the working population had emigrated, yet unemployment was still at 20 percent.

In 1996–97 the political, and then quickly the economic, conditions in Albania began to deteriorate, sparking another phase of mass emigration. The 1996 elections, in which Berisha was re-elected with an overwhelming majority, were widely regarded as corrupt. Human rights watchers became worried about abuses in Albania, as Berisha placed restrictions on the press, the judiciary and opposition parties (Perlmutter 1998). The crisis deepened in the early months of 1997 when an elaborate system of pyramid investment schemes collapsed (Korovilas 1998). Around half of all Albanians had invested in these schemes, and the World Bank estimated Albanians' lost savings at \$1.2 billion, equal to half the country's GDP in 1996 (Olsen 2000: 24). Much of the money invested in the pyramids had been capital accumulated by Albanian migrants working in Italy and Greece. Thus a large proportion of Albania's emigrants and returnees were virtually bankrupted. The ensuing political protests led to a breakdown of law and order – see Lawson and Saltmarsh (2000) and Nicholson (1999a) for somewhat contradictory accounts of this period. Arms stores were looted, prisoners escaped and gangs seized control of much of the southern part of the country, particularly the important town of Vlorë, which quickly became the jumping-off point for clandestine shipments of Albanian (and other) migrants to Southern Italy (Perlmutter 1998).

A major result of the disorder surrounding the collapse of the pyramids was a new migration and refugee crisis. In six days in early spring 1997, 10,600 Albanians crossed the Adriatic Sea to land in Apulia, replaying events of exactly six years earlier. After accepting the initial migrants as refugees, the Italian reception once again became more negative as the conviction took root that 'these migrants were coming for economic motives as part of a venture run by criminal elements' (Perlmutter 1998: 203). Heavy patrolling by Italian military ships, including surveillance in Albanian

territorial waters, brought this exodus to a close by the end of March, although tension became high when an Italian military vessel collided with a boatload of immigrants, leading to the drowning of a large number of Albanians.

By the end of the summer of 1997, sufficient order had been restored for the main state institutions to function again. A coalition government headed by the Socialist Party leader Fatos Nano helped to stabilise the situation by achieving a measure of political consensus. The Socialists have held the balance of power ever since, with Berisha's Democrats in opposition. During 1998 there was a gradual return to normality, helped by the drafting and approval of a new constitution. However, during 1999, the arrival of more than half a million Kosovo Albanian refugees exacerbated instability in the northern part of Albania. Whilst the presence of NATO troops and large contingents of aid workers helped to maintain order and ease the burden of refugee movements on Albania's poorest and most isolated region, continued instability in Kosovo has not helped to solve the problems of organised crime and migrant smuggling through Albania. On the whole, however, the years since 2000 have been a period of political quiet and modest rebuilding in Albania. The 2001 elections were tense but passed off without major incident and were pronounced broadly fair by international observers.² A steady emigration still takes place to Italy and Greece, and increasingly too now to a variety of new destinations in Europe and North America and Australia.

2.2 Albanian Demography and its Relevance for Migration

More than 20 years ago the French demographer Alfred Sauvy (1980) pointed out that the population structure of Albania was substantially different from that of all other European countries. This statement is still true, although the characteristics of the country's demographic uniqueness have changed somewhat in the meantime – partly due to migration. Albania's population dynamics remain unique by European standards: only Turkey (not unequivocally a European country) comes

² More recently, the October 2003 local elections provided a further test of the country's political stability. The Socialist Party continued its electoral majority over the Democratic Party, although their respective shares of the vote – 33.4 percent and 30.1 percent – were surprisingly close. The turnout, however, was only 52 percent. International observers – from the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe – praised the elections 'which built upon improvements made in previous elections and shared further progress towards compliance with international standards'. Despite some tensions around the southern town of Himara relating to an opportunistic alliance between the DP and the ethnic-Greek minority Union of Human Rights Party, the observers were 'encouraged by the tremendous effort made by people at the grass-roots level to conduct an open and fair election'. The 2003 election results revealed an interesting link into internal migration. Albania's traditional clan-based political structures ensure the dominance of the DP in the north and the SP in the south. The 10-15 percent increase in the DP vote in the south reflects population movement from the poorer pro-DP north to the more prosperous districts around the southern coastal towns (Vickers 2003). In her report on these elections Miranda Vickers goes on to diagnose some important remaining features of the Albanian political scene. 'With each passing election,' she writes, 'Albanians are becoming increasingly apathetic towards the political process and towards their political leadership in particular'. Sali Berisha (DP) and Fatos Nano (SP) are associated with the fear and uncertainties of the past decade: 'with these two dinosaurs of the transition period still at the helm, the population has no belief that anything will change for the better'. No government has yet managed to reorganise infrastructures: much of the population still lives in acute poverty, suffering lack of jobs, extremely low pay for those who are in employment, minimal pensions, and totally inadequate supplies of water and electricity.

close. On the other hand, Albania's failure to match European demographic norms does not mean it can simply be placed within the same class as those developing countries which record population growth rates of 2-3 percent or more. Many aspects of the social demography of Albania (life expectancy, infant mortality, literacy etc.) differentiate it from the 'Third World' (Gjonça, Wilson and Falkingham 1997).

Given that Albania's annual growth of population peaked as recently as 1960 (at 3.3 percent), remaining high until the onset of emigration in the early 1990s, Albania's demographic transition remains incomplete. It does not compare with the situation in most other European countries (including several former Eastern bloc states) which have already advanced into the second demographic transition of very low, sub-replacement fertility portending static, or even declining, and rapidly ageing populations. Interestingly Albania's neighbours, Greece and Italy, are at the forefront of this second demographic transition; their total fertility rates of 1.5 and 1.3 children per woman in 1990 (cf. Albania 3.0) are amongst the lowest in the world (King 1997). Therefore, on simple demographic criteria, it might be suggested that the migration of young Albanians to these ageing societies makes some sense.

Table 1. Albanian Population at Each Census, 1945–2001

Census	Total population ('000)	Average annual increase since previous census (%)	% rural	% urban
1945	1,122	0.7	78.7	21.3
1950	1,219	1.7	79.5	20.5
1955	1,392	2.7	72.5	27.5
1960	1,626	3.2	69.1	30.9
1969	2,068	2.7	67.7	32.3
1979	2,591	2.3	66.5	33.5
1989	3,182	2.0	64.5	35.5
2001	3,069	–	57.9	42.1

Sources: INSTAT (2002: 19); Sjöberg (1991: 42).

Table 1 traces the growth of the Albanian population and its rural/urban division at the postwar censuses. Very broadly, the population virtually tripled over the period 1945–89, and doubled during 1960–89. Table 1 also shows the average annual rates of intercensal population growth: given the absence of any measurable external migration prior to 1990, these rates equate natural

increase.³ Annual population increase remained close to 3 percent throughout the 1950s and 1960s; only in 1990 did the rate move below 2 percent (it was 1.96 percent in that year). After 1990 mass emigration fundamentally changes annual population accounting; the detailed aspects of this impact will be described later in the paper, in section 5.3.

The decrease in the total population revealed by the 2001 census makes clear the impact of emigration. Given the continuing high rate of natural increase of the population during the 1990s (Table 2), the population would have been much higher in 2001 had emigration not occurred. Indeed, summing the annual excesses of births over deaths for the years 1990–2000 (INSTAT 2001: 8) gives a natural increase for the decade of about 550,000. If this is added to the 1989–2001 intercensal decrease of 113,000, net emigration becomes 663,000. But this does not embrace the total net absence since the 2001 census included Albanian citizens who were temporarily abroad for a period of less than one year (INSTAT 2002: 79). Hence the figure of 800,000 emigrants, widely quoted in academic and government circles in Albania, seems equally plausible.

Table 2 chronicles elements of natural change at ten-year intervals between 1950 and 2000, with annual data for 1990–2000. These annual vital registration data were used to compute end-of-year population totals without reference to emigration: hence Table 2 in some senses contradicts the census data in Table 1. The annual number of births remained remarkably constant at 70,000–80,000 from 1960 until 1995; by 2000 it had dropped to 50,000. Note that the total population figure for 2000, 3.4 million (Table 2), is substantially above the 2001 census figure of 3.07 million (Table 1) because of the failure to fully account for emigration before the census.

The continuing high number of annual births into the mid-1990s indicates a future supply of potential young emigrants for the next 10–20 years. Both in 1990 and in 2000, nearly one third of the population was under 15 years of age; the proportion is kept high by emigration's removal of young-adult cohorts. Nevertheless the two-thirds decrease in the crude fertility rate between 1960 and 2000, with particularly rapid decline during the 1990s, indicates a choking-off of population growth over recent years – natural increase, for instance, halving over the decade 1990–2000.

³ Under the communist regime a pro-natalist ideology was propagated: the growth of the population was regarded as a resource for the country and its productive and para-military structures. Medals were awarded to so-called 'heroic mothers' of at least ten children (Silvestrini 1995: 9). Emigration, abortion, sterilisation and contraception were banned – although Sauvy (1980) noted that the practice of birth control was spreading, especially in urban areas, and a United Nations Fund for Population Activities mission to Albania in 1989 reported a high incidence of illegal abortion (UNFPA 1991).

Table 2. Albanian Population: Birth, Mortality and Natural Increase, 1950–2000

Year	Total population ('000)	No. of births in year	Fertility (births per thousand)	Mortality (deaths per thousand)	Natural increase (per thousand population)
1950	1,215	47,291	38.9	14.2	24.7
1960	1,607	69,686	43.4	10.4	33.0
1970	2,136	69,507	32.5	9.3	23.2
1980	2,671	70,680	26.5	6.4	20.1
1990	3,256	82,125	25.2	5.6	19.6
1991	3,260	77,361	23.7	5.4	18.3
1992	3,190	75,425	23.6	5.7	17.9
1993	3,168	67,730	21.4	5.7	15.7
1994	3,202	72,179	22.5	5.7	16.8
1995	3,249	72,081	22.2	5.6	16.6
1996	3,283	68,358	20.8	5.4	15.4
1997	3,324	61,739	18.6	5.5	13.1
1998	3,354	60,139	17.9	5.4	12.5
1999	3,373	57,948	17.2	5.0	12.2
2000	3,401	50,077	14.7	4.8	9.9

Source: INSTAT (2001: 8).

2.2 Mapping Poverty in Albania

In this section we survey in some detail the nature, measurement and incidence of poverty in Albania. This provides the main causal factor for emigration and the setting against which migrants deploy their remittances and plan their return.

Poverty should be defined in culturally and historically specific terms, in order to understand the way migration responds to the perception of the deterioration of living standards, which go beyond income-based conceptualisations of poverty. According to the study on *Poverty in Albania* commissioned by the World Bank, Albanians have a multi-dimensional view of poverty, encompassing aspects such as lack of hope; feeling excluded from social and commercial life; inability to feed, clothe and house the family; and the difficulty of continuing traditions which are seen as vital for the permanence of the family unit, such as baptisms, marriages and funerals (De Soto *et al.* 2002: 7).

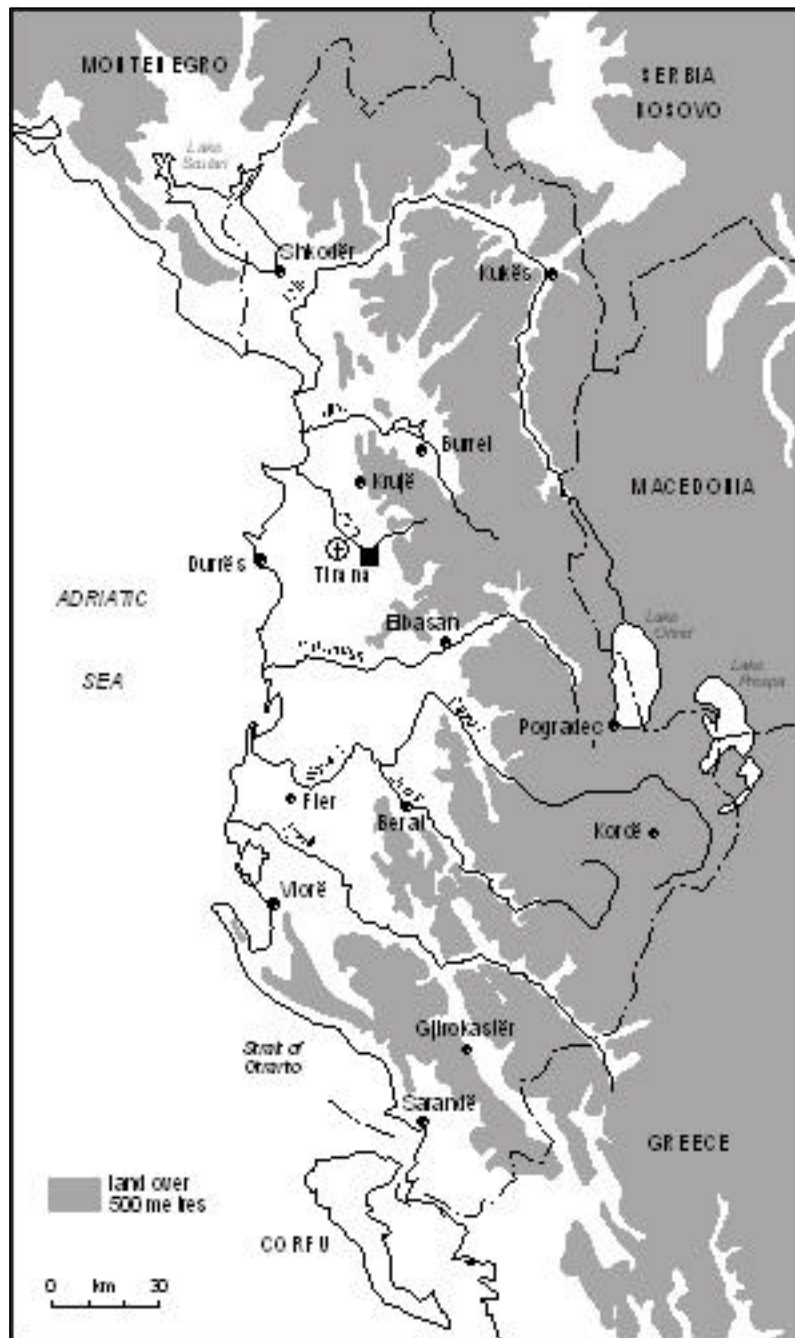


Figure 2: Albania: Location Map

Before 1991, official statistics denied the existence of poverty and hidden unemployment. Nevertheless, these were present under the previous regime. They were, however, further exacerbated by the ruthless implementation of neo-liberal economic reforms in the post-communist period. In fact, the combination of the privatisation and closure of previously state-managed industries and price liberalisation left many people and organisations redundant. At the same time, high inflation and a sharp decrease in real wages reduced the overall income of Albanian households. The above factors help to explain why urban unemployment tends to be higher in

cities that were industrial centres under the previous regime, such as Kukës, Elbasan and Korçë (see Figure 2). But the general economic situation is no better in rural Albania, where the farm sector underwent a deep transformation since political and economic reforms began in late 1991. In just a few years Albania went from 600 co-operatives and 110 state agricultural enterprises to about 440,000 private farms. Moreover, productivity decreased dramatically as land was fragmented into small and dispersed lots, irrigation facilities became obsolete or were irreversibly damaged and market facilities were dismantled. Only 30 percent of agricultural and livestock products are actually marketed. As a consequence of all these factors, agricultural production and rural living standards have fallen substantially, fuelled by unemployment and the absence of an adequate system of social protection (see Oxfam 2003).

According to official statistics (INSTAT 2002: 51, 53), the majority of the population, just over 50 percent, still works in agriculture, while other important employment sectors are construction and transport with 12.7 percent, trade with 11.6 percent, followed by industry with a mere 7.1 percent. The registered unemployment rate was 22.7 percent in 2001, with unemployment affecting young people in particular. Significantly, female unemployment, 28.4 percent, is higher than male unemployment, 18.8 percent. These figures are consistent with a general contraction and involution of Albanian women's role in society at large in post-communist times. But we must not put too much faith in these statistics. There are many reasons to be cautious when referring to official employment data in Albania: for instance, all rural inhabitants who received land from privatisation are considered to be self-employed while there is no official data nor analysis about employment in the large informal sector of Albanian economy. Nor is there any official land registry.

The 2002 *Human Development Report* for Albania (UNDP 2002: 26-38) presents a wealth of comparative statistics which not only set Albania's human development index (HDI) within the global and regional (Balkan) context, but also explore geographical variations of human welfare within Albania. The HDI is a composite of three components of human development: life expectancy, education, and standard of living (GDP per capita standardised for local purchasing power). In 2001 Albania's HDI of 0.764 placed the country 70th out of the UN listing of 173 countries with data available. This was the lowest ranking of any European country. Albania's Balkan neighbours were ranked as follows: Greece 24, Slovenia 29, Bulgaria 62, Romania 63 and Macedonia 65. However, a gratifying trend had been Albania's relative improvement; it was ranked 105 in 1995. It should also be pointed out that, within the composite index, Albania performs much

better in life expectancy and education than do other countries with similar HDI levels; the weakest element has always been GDP per capita (Gjonça, Wilson and Falkingham 1997). Regional tabulations show marked variations ranging between Tirana (HDI 0.822) and Kukës in the mountainous north-east (0.719).

If we refer to the parameters set by the UN-promoted Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy, in absolute terms 46.6 percent of Albanians are below the poverty line of \$2 per capita a day, while 17.4 percent are below the extreme poverty line of \$1 per capita a day. Moreover, one in three families experiences problems with low-quality housing, while there are serious problems with potable water supply, sewage and roads, and a worrying increase in illiteracy rates in recent years (Albanian Centre for Economic Research 2002: 48).

If this is true for the whole of Albania, it is also true that poverty is far more widespread in the country's remote and rural areas. Poverty indicators in rural areas, compared to those in urban areas, are nearly double at every educational level while the chances of being poor are about six times higher for employed people living in rural areas than for employed people living in the urban areas. The UNICEF map of poverty in Albania, which measures at a fine spatial mesh of Albania's communes and municipalities the incidence of poverty amongst local households, reveals the sharpness of the poverty divide between the rural, mountainous north and the interior, on the one hand, and the urbanised coast and the more prosperous rural south on the other (Figure 3). Data are often not available for peri-urban areas, most widespread around Tirana and Durrës, where economic circumstances tend to be often difficult and more unstable, and where the interlocking between internal and international out-migration is most visible, at least on the ground. Indeed, some of the rapidly growing peri-urban areas are even more impoverished than remote rural areas. Since these unofficial settlements around Durrës and Tirana are built by people who left rural areas, often far away, they lack infrastructure and basic social services. In most of these settlements young people have no access to education or work, and are forced to migrate in order to secure their own and their families' survival (King, Mai and Dalipaj 2003: 68-71).

As far as the possibility of benefiting from some form of help from the state is concerned, economic assistance, unemployment benefits and state pensions are under pressure as the number of claimants is increasing. According to official statistics, 42 percent of Albanian households receive assistance from one or more of the above sources, the average amount per household being around \$15 per month (De Soto *et al.* 2002: 35). Overall the social protection scheme has a low

impact on poverty alleviation and is unable to prevent social exclusion or the necessity to migrate for survival.

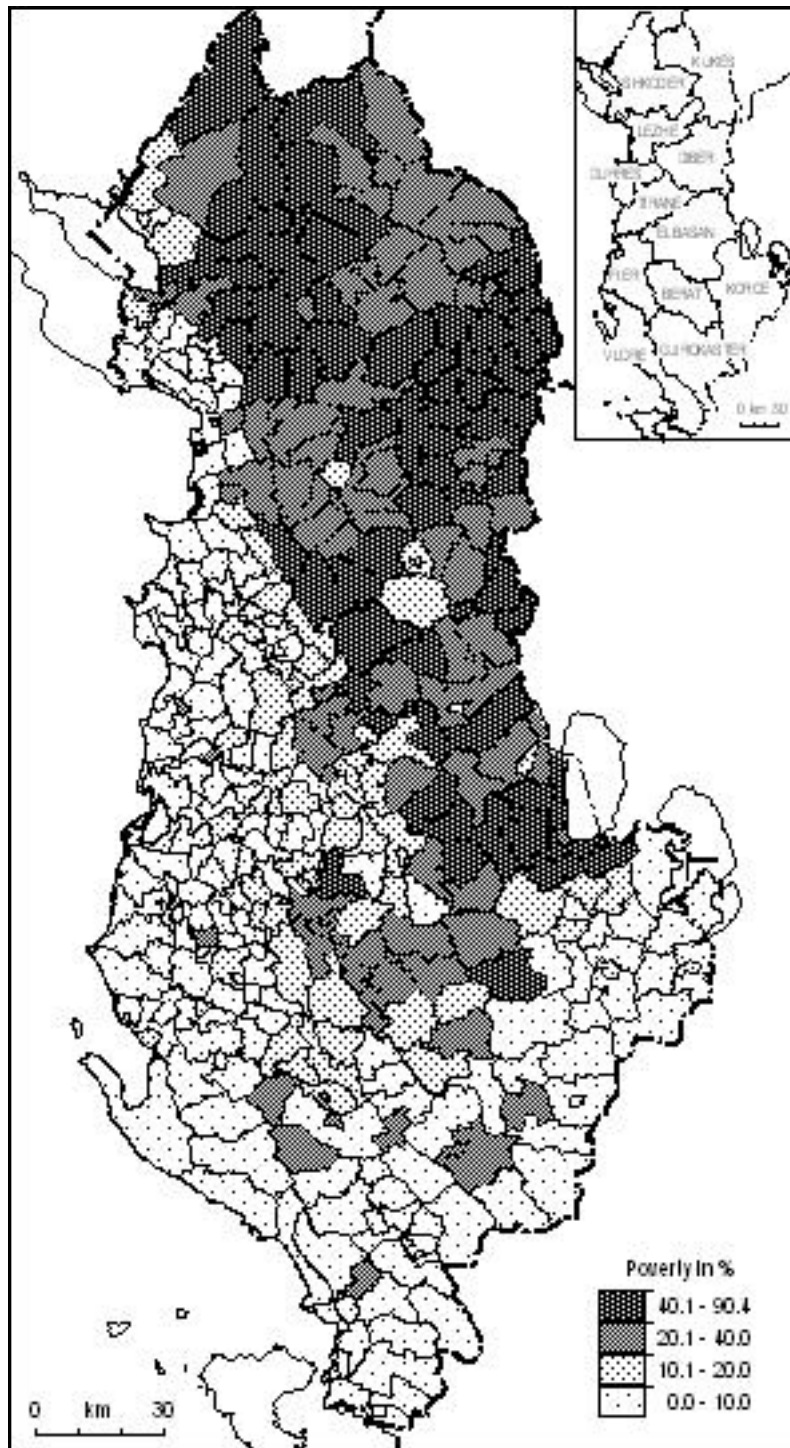


Figure 3: Poverty in Albania

Regional data published in the 2001 census (INSTAT 2002: 47-64), show that northern Albania, especially the north-east, has the highest illiteracy, the highest rates of unemployment, the lowest

incomes, the poorest housing, the highest incidence of poverty, and the greatest reliance on state social assistance, of all areas of the country. However, not too much should be read into these regional indicators, since the picture is a fast-changing one, as the Census's comparison of trends between 1989 and 2001 shows. For instance, illiteracy is quite low now, but (registered) unemployment increased dramatically, due to rapid economic liberalisation and the exposure of vulnerable groups to severe economic hardship. As the main industrial and productive activities (wood, mineral extraction and hydro-power stations) were either closed down or privatised during the abrupt transition, most families were left with no other resources than their agricultural land. Nowadays, many people live only by the income they make from the products they cultivate on the land area which was assigned to them in the post-communist period (Lawson, McGregor and Saltmarshe 2000; Saltmarshe 2001). Unfortunately, this is usually limited in quantity and of very low quality. Emigration of one or more younger family members is the best hope for family improvement.

2.3 Migration in the Albanian Cultural Context

There is a well-known Albanian proverb which states that 'A man becomes a man out in the world, a woman becomes a woman over the cradle'. The word denoting 'out in the world' is *kurbet* which, originating from the Turkish *gurbet*, refers to a journey and sojourn in a foreign land, usually for work. This act of going away and being distant is much embedded in Albanian folklore (there are, for instance, many *kurbeti* folksongs) and originates in the travel and sojourn of Albanians within the borderless Ottoman Empire (Tirta 1999). According to Pichler (2002) these established practices of temporary labour migration were consistent with Albania's agro-pastoral economic and socio-cultural history. Particularly in rural Albania, memory of such pre-communist mobility is still common, and this reference to *kurbet*, the 'traditionalist' term for migration, in memory, songs and narrative, gives cultural meaning to themes of movement, loss and sacrifice, which have acquired a new intensity in the post-communist years (Mai and Schwandner-Sievers 2003: 944-945).

This historic framing of Albanian migration through the culture of *kurbet* has important implications for the way the phenomenology of post-communist migration is experienced and interpreted – above all by migrants themselves (Papailias 2003:1064). First there is the question of terminology. Albanians use many words to refer to migration. The strict term, *mërgim*, appears to be the least used. Far more common are *emigrant* (and *emigration*) and *refugjat* – terms that reflect the twentieth-century European discourse on international migration, sovereignty, territoriality and citizenship. Barjaba's (2000) preferred term for describing the Albanian migrants of the 1990s –

'economic refugees' – obviously captures elements of both these latter two terms. This approach underlines the inextricability of Albanian migration from the economic plight of the country in the early 1990s, which was, in turn, a function of the chaotic political situation. In other words, Albanian migrants, at least in the early 1990s, and again in 1997, tended to view themselves as refugees rather than as 'free' emigrants taking an individualistic decision to migrate to a better labour market (Papailias 2003: 1064). On the other hand, as opposed to the problematic subjectivities inherent in the terms *emigrant* and *refugjat*, both loan words from the 'West', *kurbet* evokes a more neutral state of being distant. The common theme which connects all these definitions and interpretations is the separation from home and family and the sense of suffering and sacrifice that migratory absence entails.

Family is a very strong institutional structure in Albania, and one which usually occupies a very important place in the migration process (Hall 1994: 83-84). The socially-integrated, supportive family structures may have their advantages in the context of shared hardship and a common household strategy of migration for some family members, but they are generally predicated on strong patriarchal authority. In almost all cases, the person receiving the remittances and administering the whole of the family budget is the male head of the family. As within any patriarchal setting, women usually have an important function in the management of the material life of the household, but do not take part in the decision-making, except perhaps in a tokenistic way. However, with migration of sons comes a subtle inter-generational sharing of decision-making about the management and deployment of remittances. As far as the patriarchal and prescriptive nature of relationships within the household are concerned, these seem to be internalised by women and men alike.⁴

But the basic survival-bound character of the decisions to be taken makes the issue of management of power within the family look somewhat redundant, especially from the perspective of the family members. Usually it is the father who decides how to spend the money 'for the sake of the family'. However, the person who remits can also be a leading actor in the decision-making process as the money sent home is often considered an investment for his own future; how it is used depends also on the real or imagined direction of the migrant life trajectory.⁵

⁴ Evidence for this, based on interviews with Albanian migrants in the UK and with migrant households remaining in Albania (with household members abroad), is provided in King, Mai and Dalipaj (2003: 54-57, 71-86).

⁵ Again lots of case-evidence for this is found in King, Mai and Dalipaj (2003).

The strength of the family has endured throughout the long transformation from pre- to post-communism, and the patriarchally-controlled family has remained a fundamental social institution in all parts of the country, although inevitably some dismemberment has taken place through large-scale emigration, as we will see later. Moreover, there are some regional differences in the way 'family' is experienced and expressed. Northern Albania is renowned for its social and cultural conservatism, reflected in the widespread presence of extended family households and in the resilience of customary law which regulates both the life-cycle of the family, including especially gender relations, and relations between extended families (Saltmarshe 2001). It is in the north that we see the strongest survival of the *Kanun*, a code of customary law dating from the fifteenth century.⁶ The *Kanun* bases its strength not on individual responsibility but on the institution of the extended family clan, with authority the exclusive prerogative of men. Such a model was inevitably personalistic and authoritarian, and legitimated the power of domination of the adult male within the institution of the family, leading to the utmost submission of women to men.⁷

The most extreme form of these values and traditions were challenged and partially suppressed by the communist regime, but a fundamental element of continuity must be noted: Albanian communism was essentially the dictatorship of one man (Enver Hoxha) over all Albanian men and women, locating him as the father-figure and moral guide of the 'nation-family' within the values of obedience and submission that stem from the cultural background of the whole of Albanian society (Mai 2001a: 268). Communism formally sanctioned equality between men and women, but the hegemonic patriarchal mindset was never fully undermined. Indeed it re-emerged in new forms after 1990, when young men, especially, have reinvented some strategic aspects of the traditional Albanian heritage of patriarchy in order to serve their own needs and exploit young women in new ways – including trafficking them abroad for sex work (Mai 2001a). Meanwhile inter-family blood feuds have also been resurrected in the north, and have led to the emigration of some males who were in situations of danger.

⁶ There existed a number of variations on the *Kanun* in different parts of Albania; the version that has become the definitive, codified statement is that of Lek Dukagjin, which also attempted to regulate blood feuds. Such practices survived until the 1920s and 1930s (Durham 1928), and have re-emerged, sometimes in mutated forms, since 1990 (Schwandner-Sievers 2001).

⁷ One exception to this generalisation was the case of the *virgjresha* or 'sworn virgins' – women who dressed and behaved as men, swearing themselves to virginity. Usually this would occur in specific circumstances, such as an unmarried daughter without a male heir being left as the surviving family head if the men had been killed in a blood feud. Such women were considered to be men and allowed to represent the family name in the public sphere, inherit property and claim other rights, and fulfil responsibilities, normally allocated to men. See Durham (1928), Young (2000).

3. Trends and Patterns of International Migration

In this section of the paper we look solely at international migration. It needs to be stressed that, despite its sudden appearance, mass scale and clear rupture with the communist past of zero emigration, migration abroad did not start in 1990-91. Accordingly the first subsection below attempts a brief survey of earlier migrations. This survey is rather patchy because of limited documentation and source material. We then, in sections 3.2 and 3.3, turn to a chronology and enumeration of the post-1990 emigration, before characterising the shifting nature of the migration of the last decade or so in terms of different typologies. Finally, in 3.4, we look at the patterns of integration/non-integration of Albanian migrants in the main host countries to which they have migrated since 1990.

3.1 Historical Perspective

The major waves of Albanian migration have taken place round important historical and political events in the country. One of the earliest periods of emigration in the collective historic memory of the Albanians is situated in the second half of the fifteenth century, after Gjergj Kastrioti's death (the national hero known as Skanderbeg) and the fall of his stronghold at Krujë to the Ottomans. Many Catholics, including close relatives of Kastrioti and others who had participated in the resistance against the Ottoman Turks, fled the country; they settled mainly in Italy, but also in Greece and along the Dalmatian coast. This migration has been described as 'a religiously-motivated emigration, since the first Turkish occupation forced the Islamisation of the Christian Albanian population' (Derhemi 2003: 1017). In Italy they joined some already established small Albanian communities, originating with the soldiers who had settled in Italy after having fought for the House of Aragon, three or four decades earlier (Armillotta 2001). This important historic Albanian diaspora, scattered across Southern Italy and Sicily, has its roots in this period. From generation to generation, the descendants of these Albanian émigrés, or the *Arbëresh*⁸ as they are known, have been able to preserve the Albanian language and traditions through five centuries. This emigration is considered to have come to an end by the second half of the eighteenth century (Armillotta 2001). Many Albanian-Italians were later to emigrate to the USA at the beginning of the twentieth century, where they would form part of the larger Albanian diaspora there (Hall 1994: 50).

⁸ The *Arbëresh* live in 49 towns and villages, dispersed among seven regions and nine provinces extending from the Abruzzi Apennines to the South of Italy and to Sicily, situated mainly in mountainous or semi-mountainous areas; 200,000 to 300,000 *Arbëresh* are thought to be living in this area (Hall 1994: 50; Vickers 1995: 9). For an in-depth study of one of these 'Albanian' towns, Piana degli Albanesi in Sicily, see Derhemi (2003).

Five centuries under Ottoman rule, which ended with the declaration of independence in 1912, were accompanied by different types of migration (Vickers 1995). Albanian young men were coercively recruited into the Ottoman cavalry and later on as infantry, and were sent to fight for the Empire, wherever war or skirmishes broke out. Albanian men were also recruited into the elite guard or the Janissaries, whose main residence was at the High Porte in Constantinople. Many Albanian men rose to occupy important positions in the Empire's administrative and military ranks, in particular during the sixteenth and seventeenth century (Vickers 1995: 12). The Albanian Grand Viziers, such as Sinan Pasha, ruled in different corners of the Empire, some as far away as Syria (Vickers 1995: 14). Indeed, Mehmet Ali Pasha, the founder of modern Egypt, ruled as governor of Egypt for almost half a century. His dynasty came to a close with King Farouk I, who was reportedly of Albanian blood.

Many Albanians who were seen as a threat to the Ottoman rule were simply sent to exile in other Ottoman-occupied territories. Others, from more well-to-do families, went to study in places such as Romania, France etc. Yet other Albanians were forced to migrate due to the repressive policies and military campaigns of the Ottoman Turks. Those who left in large numbers were Christians, who had resisted the discriminatory policies of the Porte. This was the case of the Christians (Suliots) from Himara in the south, who fled to Greece after they were defeated by the Ottoman armies. Such was also the case of the Albanian Christians and the Vlachs from Voskopoja and Vithkuq in the south-east, who fled to Greece and Romania, after their city was razed to the ground (Vickers 1995: 20).

Following the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the contested lands along the present Albanian borders experienced considerable population displacement due to fighting. Large-scale population displacement also occurred during the Balkan Wars. This was also one of the most important periods of displacement of Albanians by the Serbs in what is today Kosovo. This period saw massive migration of ruined Albanian peasants in general, who emigrated to Turkey, Romania and Egypt, later to Greece, Bulgaria and Russia, and finally to France, America and Australia. Significant communities of Albanians formed in Istanbul (with some 60,000 Albanians), as well as in Romania, Egypt, Bulgaria and the USA (Pollo and Puto 1981: 108).

According to the detailed account of Ragaru (2002), Albanian emigration to the United States started in the late nineteenth century, with the first wave of immigrants coming from Korçë and

other areas of southern Albania. The immigrants were predominantly Orthodox young men who hoped to return home after they had made some money on the new continent (Ragaru 2002 drawing on Nagi 1988: 32-33). Most of them had a rural background and only a minority had received education. Boston became the main centre of settlement, and remained so until the 1970s, when New York took over.

In the 1920s, however, the pattern shifted to that of a family-dominated emigration and was more intensive. After the country's independence in 1912, some emigrants returned to Albania, only to re-emigrate later for permanent settlement in the US. This time it was entire families, even entire villages, who migrated as well. During the 1920s and 1930s Albanian immigration to the USA increased, and it continued to originate predominantly from southern Albania, with only very few known cases coming from the north. By 1981, the number of Albanians in the United States was estimated at around 70,000 people, including those from Kosovo and Macedonia (Nagi 1988: 25).

Little is known about the migration of Albanians to Australia, although there are intriguing scattered remarks in Charles Price's (1963) monograph on Southern Europeans in Australia (see also Hall 1994: 51-52). Even though rather small-scale, this migration is important because of its link with the Albanian migration to Australia in the post-communist period. After 1990, the majority of the Albanians who emigrated to Australia were family members or close relatives of the émigrés of the pre-1944 period. The Albanian community in Australia is small when compared to the one in USA – Albanians numbered 1500 according to the 1976 Australian census. However, there are some similarities between the two regarding timing, pattern and origin. Similar to the USA case, the emigration to Australia started around 1885. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2003) considers the 1920s as the main period of Albanian immigration to Australia, with the arrival of over 1000 persons, nearly all men. By 1933 the community had decreased somewhat, but the male/female ratio was still seriously unbalanced with 766 males to just 4 females. The pattern then shifted to family migration, as in the case of the USA; in the late 1930s many Albanians in Australia were joined by their families, especially in the Shepperton area of Victoria, which has the largest Albanian community in Australia. These emigrants came predominantly from Korçë and Kolonjë, in south-east Albania.

During the period between Independence (1912) and the founding of the Communist state (1944), Albania witnessed the two World Wars on its territory, as well as different governments in the process of further establishing the newly-independent state. Here, too, were push factors for

emigration. Those who migrated were refugees from the wars as well as political opponents of the ruling governments as they replaced one another.

However, starting in 1944, Albania's borders were sealed by the communist regime, which would result in only very few citizens being able to successfully cross to the 'other side' until 1989-90. The trickle of emigrants consisted solely of a few successful defectors, mainly political opponents of the regime, who generally established themselves in Europe, but sometimes in destinations such as the USA and Australia. For instance, in the 1950s a small anti-communist group managed to reach the United States, after having passed through Europe. Members and adherents of the major anti-communist parties – *Partia e Legaliteti* (Legality Party) and *Balli Kombëtar* (National Front) were among those in this group (Ragaru 2002). Additionally, during the early post-1944 period, a further 400 Albanian citizens are reported to have reached Australia (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2003).

In the light of this historical overview of international migration, it can be concluded that the post-communist migration of Albanians is not an isolated episode. Rather, the exploding emigration that took place after 1990 showed only too well that the period 1944-90 constituted an artificial interlude within this historical framework of the migration of the Albanian people.

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Box 1. Chronology of Albanian Migration

International migration after the fall of the communist regime unfolded in four main episodes:

1. *The 'Embassy Migrants', Summer 1990*

During June–July 1990 around 5,000 Albanians sought refuge in Western embassies in Tirana. Eventually they were allowed to leave for the West. Italy was the main recipient. The Albanian authorities liberalised the issuing of passports and a small-scale exodus continued. Altogether, from the 'embassy invasion' until early 1991, some 20,000 left.

2. *The Main Mass Exodus, March and August 1991*

Chaos leading up to Albania's first democratic elections (won by the Communists) led to the first 'boat-people' exodus to southern Italy in March 1991; 25,000 migrants were accepted and settled in Italy. A second boat exodus took place in August, but most of the 20,000 arrivals were repatriated. The Italian authorities argued that whereas the 'first wave' could be treated as refugees fleeing a tense political situation, the 'second wave' arrived after democratic elections and therefore could not be given refugee status. Meanwhile, a larger-scale but unquantified exodus took place to Greece; and clandestine migration continued to Italy. Altogether during 1991–93 an estimated 300,000 Albanians, one in ten of the population, left the country, the vast majority to Greece and Italy.

3. *The Pyramid Crisis, Spring 1997*

In the early months of 1997, the collapse of a pyramid scheme for the investment of private savings (including many emigrants' remittances) led to a period of political and economic turmoil verging on civil war in some parts of the country. This chaos produced another boat exodus to Italy in early spring 1997. Initially 10,600 Albanians were accepted by Italy, but further sea-borne migrations were repulsed, sometimes in tragic circumstances, notably on 29 March 1997, when, as a result of a collision between an Italian coastguard vessel and a boatful of Albanian migrants, 87 people, many of them women and children, lost their lives. As before, larger but unregistered crossings of the Greek border took place. Albanian communities already established by onward migration in other EU countries, such as France, Germany and Belgium, were augmented by new arrivals and the evolving diasporic network spread to the UK.

4. Kosovo Crisis, 1999

Albania played host to 500,000 ethnic-Albanian Kosovan refugees entering through northern Albania; some have used Albania as a transit route to seek asylum in other countries, including the UK. The Kosovan refugee crisis destabilised the already fragile economic and demographic situation, especially in northern Albania, and many northern Albanians mixed themselves in with the Kosovan outward migration to other European asylum destinations.

3.2 Figures

The main focus of this paper is the post-1990 emigration, which continues today. This was described in some detail earlier on (see section 2.1), and Box 1 summarises the chronology of this recent emigration. In 2000 the Albanian migration scholar Kosta Barjaba published official

government estimates of the total number of Albanian emigrants living abroad in 1999. The Albanian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs estimated 800,000 emigrants, with 500,000 in Greece and 200,000 in Italy. In both these countries, the figures combined documented and an estimate of undocumented migrants: in Italy documented migrants were in the majority; in Greece, until recently, most Albanians were undocumented. Other countries hosting significant numbers of Albanians included Germany (12,000), the United States (12,000), the United Kingdom (5,000), Canada (5,000), Belgium (2,500), France (2,000), Turkey (2,000), Austria (1,000), Switzerland (1,000) and Australia (1,460). Some of these latter figures are likely to be underestimates, given the mobility of Albanian migrants, especially within Europe, and the rapid evolution of new migration channels and routes in recent years. Indeed, recently Albanians have migrated to Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, New Zealand and South Africa.

The publication of the results of the 2001 Albanian Census (INSTAT 2002), as noted earlier, enabled new estimates of the scale of emigration during the 1990s to be made. Moreover, some estimates of its regional incidence could also be inferred. The Census revealed an estimated net loss due to emigration of more than 600,000, calculated by the census residual method. This figure is somewhat less than Barjaba's (2000) slightly earlier estimate of 800,000; but again, as noted earlier, the two figures are not incompatible since the census explicitly excluded short-term migration of less than one year's duration. Whilst most authorities concur that Albanians in Italy number around 200,000, possibly 250,000 (Bonifazi and Sabatino 2003; Pittau 2003; Pittau and Forti 2004), quantifying the much more fluid movement and presence of Albanians in Greece is more difficult since its cross-border, to-and-fro nature challenges the very meanings of migration and residency. However, the recent Greek census figure of 443,550 Albanians tends to confirm previous estimates which were generally in the range 450,000 to 500,000, since the census will probably have missed some Albanians present in Greece (King 2003).

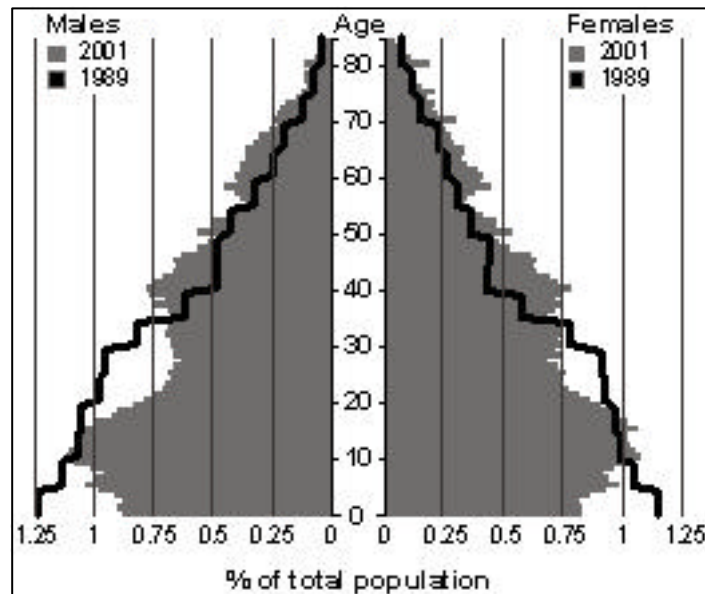


Figure 4: Age-Sex Pyramids, 1989 and 2001

The age-sex impact of emigration during the 1990s is clearly revealed by Figure 4, which compares the structure of the Albanian population at the last two censuses, 1989 and 2001. For males there has been a marked loss of people in the age-band 15-35; for females the loss is both less marked and more narrowly confined in age terms (18-32). The pyramids also demonstrate that, within the age-range 10-15 years, there still remains considerable potential for new emigration over the next 515 years, but the low-birth cohort at 05 years will diminish the pressure for emigration in the long term, at least from a demographic perspective. The 'missing births' of 05 year-olds are partly accounted for by declining fertility and partly by the 'missing parents' taken out by emigration. This situation could change if substantial return migration acted to plug the gaps in the 2001 pyramid, which could also introduce foreign-born children. At present, however, large-scale family-based return migration seems unlikely because of the country's continuing social and economic problems. Studies of Albanian emigrants abroad, for instance in Italy and the UK, indicate a low propensity for voluntary return (King and Mai 2002; King, Mai and Dalipaj 2003). Migration to, and return from, Greece has a different pattern because of its shuttle character and because many Albanians in Greece who are undocumented are periodically repatriated by the Greek police in their *skoopas* or 'broom' operations (Fakiolas 2003; Fakiolas and King 1996).

3.3 Characterisation of Albanian Migration

Barjaba (2000) has characterised the 'Albanian model' of emigration as having the following features: *recent* (post-1990); *intense* (a rate of emigration much higher than any other Eastern bloc country); largely *economically driven* – a form of '*survival migration*'; *a high degree of irregularity*, with many undocumented migrants; lots of *to-and-fro movement*, especially with Greece; and *dynamic and rapidly evolving*, especially as regards new destinations and routes of migration. Let us critically evaluate each of these defining features.

First, in the light of the historical account of Albanian migration presented above, it can be suggested that the post-1990 emigration was not a sudden phenomenon, never experienced previously by the Albanians. As such, characterising the Albanian migration as '*recent*' is perhaps temporally constrained. On the other hand, its characterisation as *dynamic and rapidly evolving* is more than justified in the light of recent data and other information.

Recent years have witnessed an improvement in the *ratio of irregular to regular* migrants for the Albanian communities, in particular in Italy and Greece, due mainly to the regularisation programmes undertaken by the governments of both countries. In 1997, Italy counted two irregular Albanian migrants for every one regularised Albanian migrant, whereas in Greece this ratio was 40 irregular Albanian migrants for every one regularised Albanian migrant. After the Turco-Napolitano decree in Italy (1998) and the Presidential Decree of November 1997 in Greece, and subject to regularisation of all those who have applied, these ratios become approximately 1:4 in Italy and 1:1 in Greece (Barjaba 2000: 61; 2003: 160-161, 166). The results of the 1998 Greek regularisation showed that 241,561 Albanians were legalised – at least for a while – a figure which is consistent, based on a 1:1 ratio, with the total figure suggested above of around 500,000 Albanians in Greece. However, one must bear in mind that migrants in Greece are likely to fall into an irregular situation within a very short time, due to the regularisation system at work there, where their stay permit is at most valid for only a year. As the experience of Greece's second regularisation (in 2002) shows, the process is often endlessly delayed by bureaucratic obstacles and it can last six months or even longer. We still await the full results of this second regularisation (Fakiolas 2003). What these regularisation programmes have achieved, however, is a better insight regarding the numbers of migrants residing in the country, and their geographical distribution. We shall say more about this last characteristic in the next subsection.

Within the context of the Albanian migration gradually becoming more regular, it is important to mention that, in recent years, many more Albanians have sought and been able to use legal ways of emigrating, as compared to the early 1990s. These have been: the Diversity Visa programmes for the USA, the Skilled Worker Visa programme for Canada, family reunification after regularisation of a family member in the host country (particularly relevant for the Italian and Greek cases), more availability and better accessibility of scholarships for students to study abroad etc. The fact that the majority of the Albanian population had completed 12 years of education made the Diversity Visa programme arguably the most popular one in the country by being accessible to a broad category of would-be migrants, whereas the Skilled Worker Visa programme for Canada excluded unskilled individuals. However, both of these programmes provide the possibility of a family migration rather than individual movement, the former being the preferred situation for many.

Regarding the *intensity* of the emigration, Barjaba (2003: 165) maintains that this trend continues at present. However, this is difficult to ascertain for the last two-three years, considering that reliable figures in the host countries exist only from regularisations or applications for regularisation put forward by migrants who may have already been residing in the host country, without necessarily having arrived there recently. It is also the case that controls over the 'migrant smuggling' trade across the Adriatic, particularly between Vlorë and Otranto (refer back to Figure 1), have become much more effective in the last two years.

The importance of migration as a *survival strategy* is reflected in the general absence of young males from Albanian households, especially in rural areas. They are all involved in migration to different countries – Greece (the majority), Italy or other EU countries and North America. Migration to Greece is usually temporary and is widespread all over Albania, with the majority of the families having one or more members working in Greece. Generally it takes the form of small groups of young males walking for several days, sometimes the whole length of Albania, depending on the region they come from, and then on across the Albanian–Greek border. Accounts of abuse and violence from the Greek army are quite common (for one vivid example see King, Mai and Dalipaj 2003: 50-51). In several cases migration to Greece is a strategy of acquiring short-term financial capital and experience in order to plan a more ambitious and longer-term migration to another Western country, such as Italy or further afield. When discussing migration, many Albanians refer to Greece as the 'key' and Italy as the 'door'. However it is also the case that many Albanians appear to have settled long-term in Greece and see their futures there, especially if they have children being educated in Greek schools (Hatziprokopiou 2003).

As well as individual migration trajectories sequenced in the way described above (first Greece, then Italy, then to other countries), it is also common for members of the same family to be distributed as emigrants in several countries, such as Italy, Greece, the UK and Germany. Clearly the sequencing of migration stages and the distribution of working family members in different countries governs the pattern and amount of remittances flowing back.

But as sons and daughters emigrate, they may get married and form their own families abroad, at which point their remittances are either lost or decrease markedly. The inevitability of this is accepted by the 'residual family' in Albania – after all, for their children to get married is exactly what they would want – but the big question that comes is whether they will return, and if so, to where in Albania. A return to the harsh mountains of northern and interior Albania is seen as obviously problematic, since the developmental potential of this region remains limited; resettlement in the more urbanised lowland of central Albania may be more attractive.

Typically, after a first phase in which the migrant sends home as much as he can to improve the living conditions of the entire family unit, he then starts investing in his own family project, building a separate household close to the parents' house.⁹ It is interesting to note how the purpose of houses built from remittances changes along with the migratory project. When the reality of returning becomes more unlikely, these houses become signifiers of belonging and proof of achievement, to be enjoyed only during visits or holidays.

At the same time, many Albanian families from the rural north and south pursue a parallel, internal migratory strategy to secure their long-term future in Albania. Regarding the interlocking of international migration and internal moves, there is evidence of a number of variations on this theme: international moves followed by internal migration, vice versa, and simultaneous and overlapping migrations by different family members (see King, Mai and Dalipaj 2003: 62-71). We deal more specifically with internal migration patterns in the next main section of this paper (section 4).

These complex typologies of movement and relocation are creative and rational responses to the geography of opportunity structures on the part of Albanian households and families – a kind of do-

⁹ We use the male gender here since, in this typical model of Albanian emigration, the main protagonists are nearly always male. We will cover the female side of the migration process presently.

it-yourself development in the face of limited opportunities for economic improvement in the home country, and in northern Albania especially (Nicholson 2001).

However, in recent years, Albanian migration has evolved from being almost exclusively a 'survival migration', to something more diverse. Thus, Albanians nowadays emigrate also to improve their economic situation, to secure a better future for their children, to access better professional opportunities, to pursue study opportunities abroad, and to escape the constraints of certain social practices and norms, such as in the case of women or other marginalised groups.

Participation of Albanian women in migration has increased in recent years in particular as a result of family reunification. This is an important change in the previously male-dominated pattern of Albanian contemporary migration, even though there is still no equal gender balance as such. Both for Greece and Italy, the main two destinations for Albanian migrants since 1990s, successive counts from regularisations and the 2001 census round show that, whilst females accounted for around 20 percent of total Albanian migrants in the early and mid-1990s, by 2000-01 the share was approximately 40 percent (King 2003). The majority of females have migrated as part of a family, either together with the family (especially migration to the USA through the Diversity Visa programme), or to Canada through the Skilled Worker Visa programme or following their husband/fiancé after he has established himself in a host country. The majority of (single) females who have migrated alone have done so to pursue their studies in different EU countries, as well as in the USA. Single females emigrating to work abroad through legal channels are still few, and mostly comprise the professional and highly skilled women, mostly from well-to-do families.

A growing concern in Albania as well as amongst governments of EU countries is the migration of Albanian women for the purpose of working in the sex industry. Whilst there has been much publicity and media sensationalisation of this phenomenon, serious and dispassionate analysis has been rather rare. The association and often conflation of this migration with human trafficking has resulted in restrictive and discriminatory practices regarding undocumented women working in the sex industry in Europe. The myth of the 'innocent, naïve, young, uneducated village girl' as the stereotype of the trafficking victim is still to be rectified; in reality, those who participate in the sex work migration present a complex continuum of age, education, background, consent for migration and participation in sex work etc. While exploitation needs to be addressed at every point, be it in working conditions, migration, home environments etc., a similar concern needs to address the migratory agendas of these individuals as well.

Albanian migration has evolved also from the point of view of the age structure of migrants. Whilst Albanian migration is still dominated by migrants of working age, whether they are men or women, this pattern has recently been enriched by the phenomenon of 'migrating grannies'. These are grandparents joining the rest of the family (son or daughter) in the host country. This has been made possible through the regularisation of many migrants, who have then in turn opted for a family reunification in the host country. The importance of this phenomenon for the Albanian family has been significant in two aspects: economic and social/emotional. Having parents to look after the home and the children, particularly when they are at a pre-school age, allows both parents to work and have more free time for themselves, at a lesser financial cost. It also serves as a comfort zone, in particular in the context of Albanian society, where family is very important. Grandparents, on the other hand, enjoy being around and contributing to the raising of their grandchildren, as well as being with the family, rather than alone and even abandoned back in Albania. This has been the case of many other elderly, who have stayed behind and have no one to look after them. This parallel phenomenon of 'orphan pensioners', socially isolated in rural areas of Albania after all their children have emigrated, has been diagnosed as a serious social and welfare problem by the World Bank study on Albanian poverty (De Soto *et al.* 2003). Looking after the elderly in institutions is a new and underdeveloped phenomenon in Albania, as socially and financially it has always been the responsibility of their children to look after them. Unfortunately, this is very much an under-researched area, and we highlight this topic as one of the key points in a future research agenda in our concluding discussion to this paper.

Important and under-researched is also the migration of ethnic minorities, especially when that migration might be covered by bilateral agreements between neighbouring countries regarding minorities. Such is the case of the Macedonian minority in the Prespa area in the south-east of Albania. Influenced by the bilateral agreement of the governments of Albania and Macedonia and the geographical proximity between the two countries, many members of this community shuttle daily between their villages and the villages of Macedonia on the other side of the border. Macedonia is one of the few countries that allows visa-free movement of Albanian citizens in general, but the procedures for this ethnic minority, especially those entering the country for work, are much more flexible and accessible. However, many would prefer to work elsewhere, as the wages in Macedonia are not very satisfactory.

Other interesting patterns of migration are observed in the Roma community, who migrate as a group, after having decided a group leader. They mostly take up seasonal work, which is a pattern of migration observed amongst Albanians in general, especially when migrating to Greece, and particularly for people living in villages close to the border. Most seasonal work is in agriculture. However, a huge demand for mainly unskilled labour has been created in Athens, due to the construction of the infrastructure which will support the upcoming Olympic Games in 2004. Athens is also the place where the majority of Albanian migrants are settled.

Those who work seasonally in Greece are not necessarily all unskilled. During the summer holidays many teachers, students and people working in the public sector go to Greece to work for the summer, mainly in agriculture. The earnings of three months' work in Greece as a manual agricultural labourer are likely to be higher than a year's salary for a village secondary school teacher in Albania. Many who take this option have to support their children at University, which has become close to impossible for families with state salaries, let alone for those who do not have any member of the family employed in the public sector.

3.4 Reception and Integration in the Host Societies

The integration of Albanians abroad – which means primarily in Italy and Greece – has been powerfully affected by perceptions created and maintained by the media and by politicians anxious to exploit the role of the media for their own ideological or vote-winning purposes. Here we take first the Italian reaction, which has been well documented (see Carzo and Centorrino 1999; Mai 2002b; Pozzi 1997); and then, more briefly, the Greek one. For both countries the conclusion is that, in reality, Albanians have achieved a remarkable and dynamic socio-economic integration, and they have done this *despite* an all-encompassing negative stereotyping from the two host societies.

The Italian response to the immigration of Albanians during the 1990s is a story in itself, above all driven by the media, which have played an unusually prominent role in constructing images of Albania, and Albanian immigrants, which have been highly ambiguous and contradictory, but on balance increasingly negative (King and Mai 2002).

The first arrivals on the South Italian coast in March 1991 were greeted with broadly positive *reportage*. The Italian press labelled Albanians 'historical neighbours', 'brothers from across the sea', and Albania as 'our Kuwait' (this was the time of the Gulf War) or 'our East Germany' (Balbo

and Manconi 1992: 65–68). However, right from the beginning a more patronising interpretation was also apparent: Albanians were portrayed as backward, abject, helpless. By the time the August 1991 wave arrived, the tone had completely changed. Benevolence and genuine pity turned to rejection and hostility, and the press discourse spoke constantly of an ‘Albanian invasion’ flooding the coastal towns of Italy. Albanians were projected as ungrateful, lazy and violent – an image reinforced by pictures of them cooped up in compounds, protesting against bureaucratically-delayed decisions on their future (Zinn 1996).

The pyramid crisis, the breakdown of law and order over much of Albania and the resultant exodus of spring 1997 brought a renewed Italian media feeding-frenzy, out of all proportion to the scale and seriousness of Albanian problems at a time when other world events (massacres in Algeria, earthquake in Iran...) were objectively more important. This media blitz deployed the full panoply of negative thematic images of Albania and Albanians: violence, chaos, backwardness, poverty, desperation, mass migration, child trafficking, prostitution, family breakdown – all of which, it was implied, were the exact opposite of the ‘good society’ of Italy. Dominant of all these stereotyping labels has been the equation between Albanians and ‘criminals’ (Silj, 2000).

Vehbiu and Devole (1996) interpreted the way Italian media framed Albanian migration and the presence of Albanians in Italy as a powerful ‘myth of the other’. The historical and social preconditions for this mythical construction are to be traced on the one hand in the new European political and cultural order that emerged after the end of the Cold War, and on the other in the highly ambivalent post-colonial relationship between Italy and Albania, echoing Fascist Italy’s military occupation of Albania from 1939 to 1943 (Mai 2003).

For the 1991 and 1997 Albanian exoduses to Italy, the timing was hugely significant: both came at a time of profound change and self-questioning in Italy itself. First, with the end of the Cold War, Italy lost part of its geopolitical *raison d’être* as a US-supported bulwark against communism, both external (the Soviet bloc) and internal (the Italian Communist Party). The 1991 migration coincided with the beginnings of the demise of the so-called First Republic – the Christian-Democrat hegemony which had dominated, and frozen, Italian politics for nearly 50 years on the basis of a strategic alliance against the advance of communism in Italy. A crisis of internal legitimation occurred through the exposure of widespread patronage and corruption practices (the so-called *tangentopoli* scandals), which led ultimately to the collapse of an entire political system and way of life (King and Mai 2002; Mai 2003).

Second, the 1997 migration crisis – in which Italy initially accepted but then repulsed refugees from Albania's economic and political chaos, preferring instead a high-profile military-humanitarian mission to Albania to restore order (and, of course, prevent further migrations) – coincided with Italy's wish to reassert its prominent European identity in the run-up to economic and monetary union. Thus, under what Perlmutter (1998) calls the 'politics of proximity', the peace-keeping operation in Albania was designed to give Italy European credibility at a time when its EU partners were doubting both its commitment to Europe and its ability to satisfy EMU criteria.

And yet, despite media stereotyping as undesirables and criminals, and despite being, in public opinion polls, the immigrant group least favoured by Italians, Albanians have achieved considerable success in integrating into Italy. In many respects they are the immigrant nationality closest to Italians – geographically, somatically, linguistically and culturally. Whilst geographical proximity and phenotypical similarity are self-evident, culture and language need further explanation. Despite their half-century of communist rule and predominantly Islamic heritage,¹⁰ Albanians share many 'Mediterranean' cultural characteristics with Italians, as well as an experience of Italian colonialism. And as a result of their habit of secretly watching Italian television during the later years of communism, they are familiar both with Italian culture (or the television version of it) and the language. This subversive tuning into Italian culture undoubtedly conditioned their subsequent migratory projects since Italy represented, just a boat-ride away, Western utopia (Mai 2001b). On the other hand, these very same elements of similarity have simultaneously acted against acceptance and integration since, as many authors have pointed out (Mai 2002, 2003; Perlmutter 1998; Zinn 1996), Albanians recall in the Italian collective memory an earlier version of their own backwardness, poverty and necessity to migrate; more specifically they are a re-birth of Italy's own 'internal Other', the Southern Italian migrant.

Concrete evidence for Albanians' socio-economic integration in Italy is rather scattered, but recent research paints an increasingly positive picture. From empirical surveys (Campus 1999; Carchedi 2001; Da Molin 2001; King and Mai 2004; Melchionda 2003), the following picture emerges. First, Albanians have lower rates of unemployment than other immigrant nationalities. Secondly,

¹⁰ The religious background of Albanians needs a few words of qualification. Religion was outlawed by Enver Hoxha who declared Albania the world's first atheist state. Whilst there has been some reaffirmation of religious identity in the post-communist era, Albanians tend not to have strong religious convictions. Very broadly, we may say that 70 percent of Albanians are of Islamic heritage, 20 percent (mainly in the south) are Orthodox, and 10 percent (in the north) are Catholics. See Hall (1994: 42-49) for a detailed discussion.

Albanians are employed in a variety of sectors. Relative to other groups, there is a concentration of males in industry and construction, but they are also found in many other manual jobs in farming, general labouring and low-grade service work. Females work mainly in domestic service, cleaning, baby-sitting and other service jobs. Especially in the construction sector and allied trades, there is a growing tendency to self-employment and small business formation, although it seems that Albanians are still less entrepreneurial than most other foreigner groups in Italy (Bonifazi and Sabatino 2003: 984). In cities and towns, some of the better educated migrants, with high-school diplomas and university degrees, are able to access higher-level technical and office jobs, though not always commensurate with their qualifications. There are also some 6,000 Albanian students enrolled at Italian universities, especially in Apulia (Bari, Lecce) and Rome. Although there is a brain drain of Albanian scholars and intellectuals to Italy, most of this type of migration goes to other European countries and North America (Gedeshi *et al.*, 1999).

Other indicators of a relatively well-developed Albanian social integration in Italy are their wide spatial diffusion throughout the country, including a presence in many rural areas and small towns, and their high degree of informal social contact with Italians. Results from one study show that Albanians are more likely than any other migrant group to ask Italian friends to help them solve a problem (Carchedi and Gesano 2001: 50). Albanians are less likely to rely on charitable help, and more likely to work within the 'Italian system' to make progress and address their needs.

Demographically, too, Albanians have made some rapid progress towards a 'normalisation' of their profile (Bonifazi and Sabatino 2003). The proportion of females doubled during 1992–99, and Albanians now have higher percentages of married couples and children than longer-established migrant groups from North Africa such as Moroccans and Tunisians (King 2003). This family-oriented structure of Albanian migration is one which is completely overlooked by the popular imagery of the group. As Zinn and Rivera (1995) have shown in their study of Albanian women in Apulia and Basilicata, Albanian families, especially when they have young children, are rather readily accepted by their Italian neighbours and high levels of social integration are reached, facilitated by Albanians' good command of Italian.

On the other hand, there are several negative aspects of the Albanian presence in Italy which cannot be denied. Albanians are one of two main migrant nationalities (the other is Nigerian) engaged in prostitution, and a minority of males are involved in crime: the evidence for these links is carefully assessed by Jamieson and Silj (1998). Finally, there is a serious problem of

unaccompanied minors, often as young as 14 or 15, sent by their families to find work as independent migrants.¹¹

Much of what has just been said about Albanians in Italy holds for Greece. Since 1990 Albanian migration to Greece has followed three main routes (Figure 1): the two main road crossings at Kakavi (leading to Ioannina) and Bilisht (leading to Kastoria and Florina), and the short sea link from Sarandë to Corfu. A fourth route goes via southern Macedonia to Thessaloniki. However, much movement has been clandestine, via mountain paths which cross the border in remote places (King, Iosifides and Myrivili 1998). There is, compared to Italy, a greater element of shuttle migration, which, as already noted, makes estimating the presence of Albanians in Greece difficult.¹²

Data on employment of Albanians in Greece are only indicative. The 1997 partial data quoted by Sintès (2001) show 30 percent in construction and public works, 19 percent in other manual jobs outside the building sector, 29 percent in domestic service, 11 percent in mechanical and repair work, 6 percent in catering and hotels, and 5 percent in other jobs. No gender breakdown is given, but it is certain that virtually all those in domestic service and many in the hotel sector are female. These figures therefore suggest that women constitute around a third of the Albanian workforce in Greece.

There is an obvious relationship between the spatial distribution of Albanians and the types of employment available. Urban areas such as Athens, Thessaloniki and Patras offer the possibility of year-round employment (albeit often in casual, temporary jobs); farming areas and tourist sites offer mainly seasonal work. Although there are no detailed data on the geography of Albanians' labour in Greece, several qualitative studies combine to give a consistent overall picture (Droukas 1998; Fakiolas 2000; Hatziprokopiou 2003; Kasimis, Papadopoulos and Zacoboulou 2003; Lazaridis and Psimmenos, 2000; Lianos, Sarros and Katseli 1996).

¹¹ This group has been the subject of some recent research and social study – see, e.g. Campani, Lapov and Carchedi (2002); La Gamba (2000); Marzin (2000); Servizio Sociale Internazionale (2001), all of which shows, in various cities, that this is a phenomenon which is dominated by Albanian youngsters. In Rome, for example, 40 percent of immigrant unaccompanied minors are from Albania.

¹² The shuttle migration takes various forms. From villages in southern Albania close to the border people move to work in northern Greece on a weekly or even daily basis. Other Albanians work for a few months each year in the tourist season, especially on Corfu and other tourist islands, or in temporary construction work. For yet others the shuttling may be less regular, linked to the need to earn money for some family need or project, or perhaps to finance an emigration further afield.

In rural Greece Albanians work in agriculture and general labouring, especially during summer when demand for fruit-picking and other labour-intensive tasks is high. Such has been the impact of Albanian immigrant labour that virtually all wage labour in Greek agriculture is now performed by migrants (Fakiolas 2003; Kasimis, Papadopoulos and Zacoboulou 2003). This implies a ubiquitous presence, but with particular concentrations in areas of intensive farming such as the plains of Thessaly or the olive groves of Corfu. Over time, Albanians have also found more stable types of rural work in sectors like animal husbandry, poultry farming, greenhouses and market gardening.

Secondly, many Albanians work in the largely seasonal tourist industry, located on the coasts and especially the islands. Both men and women are employed in tourist complexes, hotels and restaurants. They do a variety of jobs – as cleaners, kitchen staff, waiters, porters, gardeners, maintenance workers etc.

Finally, in Athens and other cities Albanians are employed as unskilled or semi-skilled labour in the construction industry, in hotels and restaurants, in small manufacturing or service concerns involved in activities such as clothing, removals or painting and decorating, and in personal services such as domestic cleaners, gardeners, baby-sitters, carers of elderly people etc. A number of Albanian girls and young women (and also boys) are procured by prostitution rings to work in the sex industry (Psimmenos 2000).

It can be seen that the vast majority of these jobs are low-skilled and insecure. Most are located in the informal economy where employers take advantage of Albanians' illegal status. The recent regularisations have improved this situation somewhat. On the other hand the Greek employment market has to some extent bifurcated into 'jobs done by immigrants' and better-status work done by Greeks. Discrimination, exploitation and racism continue to be widespread, but tolerated by Albanians because of the dire economic conditions in their home country.

The Greek reaction to the immigration of around half a million Albanians since 1990 has been similar to the Italian one in many respects. Initially welcomed, Albanians quickly became denigrated with a series of highly negative stereotypes. If anything the vilification has been more severe in Greece, reflecting the more massive presence of Albanian migrants, the lack of other prominent migrant nationalities, and the more antagonistic history of Greco-Albanian relations

during and since the Ottoman Empire.¹³ The Greek reaction is also made more complicated by the presence, amongst the immigrants, of large numbers of ethnic-Greek Albanians who are treated more favourably than 'other' or 'true' Albanians, both in terms of their rights in Greece (automatically given visas and work permits) and the attitudes of the Greek population.¹⁴

The standard image of Albanians in Greece is that they are 'cunning, primitive, untrustworthy' ... 'dangerous' and 'criminals' (Lazaridis and Wickens 1999: 648). The topic of Albanian criminality has been obsessively pored over by the Greek media, with the result that public opinion has been fundamentally changed. Given that police and court behaviour tends to reflect the bias of society at large, Albanians have been disproportionately targeted, leading to high numbers of reported arrests and prison inmates. Droukas (1998), who has made a special study of Albanian criminality, advises great caution when examining Greek crime statistics, stressing their unreliable and distorted nature. One of the most penetrating and wide-ranging analyses of Albanian migration to Greece is offered by Psimmenos and Georgoulas (2001). Two historical reference points are the millennial tradition of Balkan mobility (transhumance, nomadism, longer-distance migration), and the turning of Greece into a 'Germany of the South' with its reliance on temporary guestworkers for undesirable but essential jobs. Strong nationalism promotes a cultural division of labour based on genealogy, language and religion. The hegemonic power of the Greek *ethnos* creates a 'social landscape of people in Greece that emphasises national identity as a framework for civil existence', creating in turn an exclusionary straightjacket for minority, refugee and immigrant workers (Psimmenos and Georgoula 2001: 61). Triandafyllidou and Veikou (2002) develop the notion of a 'hierarchy of Greekness' in relation to Albanian immigration and recent Greek immigration policy. Next to Greek resident nationals come the Pontian (or Pontic) Greeks who are 'repatriates' from the former Soviet Union, to which they migrated in the early twentieth century from their historic Greek homeland of Pontos in Asia Minor. As members of the Greek diaspora, Pontian Greeks are given full citizenship status and other benefits that facilitate their integration into Greek society. Ethnic-Greek Albanians come next in the hierarchy: their 'Greek nationality' is recognised but they are not given full citizenship rights and are not officially encouraged to settle

¹³ The long-standing nature of anti-Albanian rhetoric in Greece is indicated in a study of their representation in the Greek press in the early nineteenth century, where similar stereotypes of Albanians as 'dangerous', 'bandits', 'criminals' etc. are found (Skoulidas 2002).

¹⁴ The status and treatment of ethnic-Greek Albanians by the Albanian government has been a source of considerable tension between the Greek and the Albanian authorities over the years – as has Greece's treatment of Albanian migrant workers. A major source of dispute is the size of the ethnic-Greek population in Albania. The 1989 Albanian census enumerated 58,758 ethnic Greeks, but the Greek government claims the community numbers 300,000. An independent estimate, according to Hall (1996b: 86), would be about 120,000.

permanently in Greece.¹⁵ Finally come the 'true' Albanians who are seen both as Moslems and allies of the historical enemy, the Ottoman Turks, and as manifestations of that other enemy, communism.

The negativity with which Albanians are viewed by Greek society and its institutions and structures is reflected in some of the terminology used in recent academic discourse: they are the 'new helots' of the Greek economy (Droukas 1998), suffering from 'multiple layers of oppression' (Lazaridis 2000) and confined to 'periphractic spaces' (Psimmenos 2000) – 'fenced in' and brutally excluded from mainstream Greek society. And yet, as in Italy, Albanians have been able to negotiate their way round and through these exclusionary barriers. Just as in Italy Albanians are able to stress their shared Adriatic or Mediterranean heritage, so in Greece the shared Balkan identity is played on. Most Albanians learn Greek quickly and, at a local and personal level, above all through work and neighbourhood relations, are able to relate in a dynamic way to Greek society (Hatziprokopiou 2003).

4. Trends and Patterns of Internal Migration

We now shift our scale and focus of analysis from external to internal migration. In many respects the changes in migration patterns and behaviour in this domain have been as significant as those discussed in the previous section on emigration, but they are less well researched and few scholars, outside of Albania, have yet analysed them. The symbiotic – but also potentially unstable – relationship between, on the one hand, development and modernisation in Albania, and, on the other, the internal migration and redistribution of the population, remains a key area within which research needs to be developed.

In this section we follow a similar analytical sequence to that used to structure section 3 on emigration. First we give a brief historical perspective (section 4.1), then an analysis of statistical trends deriving from 1989-2001 intercensal comparisons (4.2), an attempt to develop a typology of the patterns of movement observed (4.3), and some brief comments on the social dimensions of internal migration (4.4).

¹⁵ Two reasons can be suggested for this. First, to do so would be to encourage depopulation of the 'North Epirus' region (southern Albania) which Greece traditionally had irredentist claims towards. Second, the divide between ethnic-Greek and ethnic-Albanian Albanians has become blurred (through marriage, name change, false documents, tactical religious conversion etc.) so that it is increasingly difficult for the Greek authorities to determine who is a 'true' ethnic-Greek Albanian.

4.1. Historical Perspective

The period 1945-90 in Albania was characterised by centrally planned population movements within the country, at times very strictly regulated and at other times not so efficiently enforced. The few studies available on population growth and movement in Albania during this time suggest that internal migration in Albania took place more than conventionally thought. Thus, Sjöberg (1992) argues that, despite the policies pursued of containing migration to urban centres, internal migration was taking place; approximately one third of the population growth in urban areas during 1960-87 was due to rural-urban migration. Sjöberg (1992) further suggests that rural-rural migration during the same period was just as important as rural-urban migration, with a significant shift of population from northern and southern rural areas to the rural areas adjoining the main cities in the west and along the coast. Industrialisation, job opportunities, climate and population pressure were identified as some of the factors that influenced that movement (Borchert 1975). Sjöberg (1989) also maintains that, at times, migration took place outside the planned parameters; that is to say, people settled without official authorisation or registration, whether in the cities or villages. Arguably, the growth of the peri-urban areas of Tirana experienced a fair amount of such 'unofficial' migration. However, considering the way the whole system worked it is equally possible that this was unlikely. Looking at the attraction of Tirana as a major industrial, administrative and cultural centre, Sjöberg investigates what he calls '*diverted migration*'. This is when migratory flows heading for a particular destination, such as Tirana, experience a diversion to nearby destinations, in this case Tirana's rural hinterland. It appears that the would-be migrants who were not able to obtain permission to move their residence to Tirana proper, managed to migrate to one of the rural cooperatives or state farms in the vicinity of the city. This is supported by the suggestion that it was administratively easier for Albanians to move into rural areas than to urban centres. These '*diverted in-migrants*' in turn contributed to the formation of densely populated *extra-urban settlements*' (Sjöberg 1992: 13). A significant number of these people commuted to the capital, and their aim continued to be settlement in the capital itself. In other words, the frenetic recent migration to Tirana – of which more presently – was not without historical precedent and was something that should have been expected. Therefore, much more could have been done to plan a smoother urban growth than has been the case in the last 10-15 years.

In a more temporally restricted study Borchert (1975) argued that internal migration during 1965-71 occurred as a result of economic developments, industrialisation, reforms in agriculture (such as the draining of swamps in the coastal plains), and population pressure due to high natural growth rates. Thus, Borchert (1975) shows a significant movement from the northern and southern

mountainous areas towards the plains along the coast, mainly in the Tirana-Durrës-Elbasan triangle. These tendencies are very similar to the pattern of internal migration observed in the last 12 years (between the 1989 and 2001 censuses), which will be discussed in some detail in the following parts of this section.

Besides movement for the above-mentioned reasons, two other important groups were moving internally: those whose migration within the country was connected to their profession, and the internally exiled. The first group consisted mainly of members of the party (Hoxha's Albanian Party of Labour) and the bureaucratic cadre or army officers, who were rotated from one position to another in different parts of the country, mainly from town to town. They would often migrate together with their families.

As for the case of the internally exiled, individuals and whole families were forcefully displaced, following the defection to the 'West' of a family member and/or the arrest and imprisonment of a family member accused of political conspiracy or subversive actions. They would always be exiled in rural areas, most of which were similar to labour or concentration camps, and deaths from hunger and overwork were not rare. The duration of exile and the movement from one centre of exile to another varied with the graveness of the accusation of crime. After 1990, these centres became sources of out-migration.

The so-called 'law on the main constitutional dispositions' was amended by the Albanian Assembly in March 1993. According to this law as amended, 'everyone has the right to choose his domicile and move freely within the state's territory' (quoted in Dervishi and Fuga 2002: 149). However, the massive spontaneous internal migration that the country would experience in the last decade had already started in 1991.

4.2 Figures

Data specific to internal migration in Albania in the 1990s are scarce, even though the magnitude of this migration is impressive. The 2001 census missed a vital opportunity to rectify this, offering no attempt to disaggregate internal from external migration and failing to draw up a proper regional internal migration matrix. The situation was further complicated by changes in the administrative system of defining regions and localities within Albania. However, as expected, one of the regions that has received great interest in research has been Tirana and the peri-urban area surrounding it. According to official records the population of Tirana increased from 368,000 in 1989 to 520,000 in

2001 (INSTAT 2002: 32); however, according to some unofficial estimates, the Tirana urban area contains 800,000 people (De Soto *et al.* 2002: 113). The confusion over the extent of the increase is because many recent in-migrants are not registered, so their precise numbers are unknown. Moreover, the unplanned nature of this migration and settlement has left the new peri-urban areas quite detached from the towns themselves. This, in turn, blurs the distinction between 'urban' and 'rural' and makes the delimitation of Tirana and other major urban centres rather difficult.

4.3 Typologies of Internal Movement, and their Relationship to External Migration

Economic crisis and political changes stimulated large-scale flows of emigrants, particularly to Greece and Italy, but internal movements, which were very limited before 1990, have had, if anything, a greater impact on demographic change at the local and district levels. This mixing of internal and international mobility has produced quite a complex regional typology of migratory change in Albania.

It is important to note that the typology of internal migration in post-1990 Albania resembles very closely that of the centrally-planned Albania, at least as regards the direction of movement and to a certain degree the age structure. In both cases, the most significant population flows have been from the mountainous north and south towards the western lowlands, mainly within and around the triangle of Tirana, Durrës and Elbasan. The difference, of course, is that now many more people have been able to settle in these cities themselves, rather than just the rural hinterland – although peripheral squatter settlements have mushroomed since 1990 for those unable to gain a residential foothold within the city. In both cases the majority of those who migrate are people of working age. Whereas the earlier studies, such as Sjöberg (1989), suggest considerable intra-district migration for the pre-1990 period, this is hard to ascertain post-1990 because the data for this period is lacking.

Nowadays, for many youth in the rural areas, especially in the north, it can be said that the road to Tirana or Shkodër passes through Athens' Omonia square, or by boat across the Adriatic Sea. International migration is thus used to finance an internal migration to a place seen as more desirable for the individual's and the family's future. Usually this is a place either within or in the vicinity of one of the main economic centres such as Tirana, Durrës, Vlorë or Elbasan. During this rural-urban or rural-rural (highland to lowland, interior to coast) migration, people from the inland rural regions with a harsh climate and less productive land, set up home in the cities mentioned or in the villages adjacent to them, which are also sought for their milder climate and higher land

productivity. However, as these major centres have become more and more expensive, those with less money at their disposal might decide to migrate to another town or village, closer to their original home. Thus for instance Albanians from the more remote mountain areas in the north might decide to make the first move to Shkodër, rather than Tirana; or rural people living in the deep mountainous areas of Devoll, in the far south-east, might decide to migrate to a village close to Korçë, the main local town of the region, rather than go further afield.

In some cases it happens that the migration planning sees the sequence reversed: first, an internal move away from the remoteness of village life in northern or southern Albania to a place in central Albania which then acts as a platform both for a better life for the family as a whole, and for the emigration of some of its younger members abroad. Thus, financing a migration to Durrës or Vlorë with earnings from temporary work in Greece, might open up opportunities to emigrate to other more desirable European destinations, such as Italy or the UK, or even to North America or Australia.

The main type of internal movement that has taken place in Albania since 1989 has been, as expected, from rural to urban areas. The most serious population loss is observed in the rural north, as well as in the rural south, particularly villages high up in the mountainous zones. The regions which have gained the most in terms of population numbers have been the Durrës-Tirana-Elbasan zones. These patterns can be verified by reference to data and maps elaborated from the 2001 Albanian census, which plot population change 1989-2001 (Figure 5; INSTAT 2002). As indicated above, neither internal nor external migration can definitively be measured as such, nor separate from each other. Two surrogate measures can be made: population change (Figure 5b), and the percentage of the 1989 population no longer resident in the same district in 2001 (Figure 5c).

On the basis of the statistics and their qualitative interpretation by various authors and authorities (Dervishi and Fuga 2002: 150-167; INSTAT 2002: 31-34; King, Mai and Dalipaj 2003: 62-65), three main migration regions can be identified, each reflecting different migration trajectories:

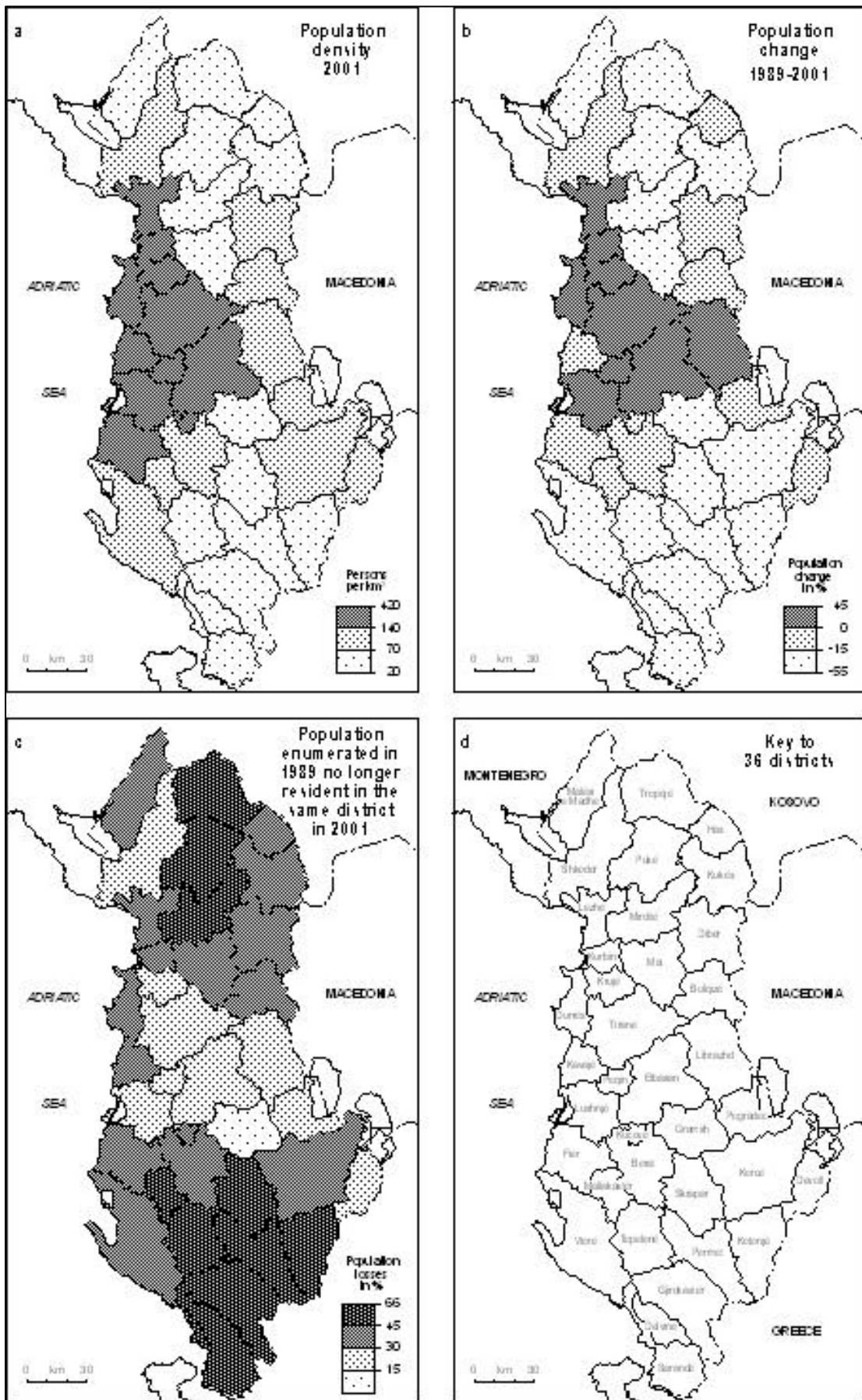


Figure 5: Aspects of Population Change and Migration, 1989-2001

In the southern districts, south of Vlorë, Berat and Korçë, three-quarters of the total of district-level out-migration is made up of emigration abroad, mainly to Greece, whereas only a quarter has moved internally. Rural depopulation has been intense, especially from the ethnic-Greek areas, since people of this minority group have been more easily able to get documents for travelling to Greece. In some cases, intense outmigration, abandoned dwellings and land etc. have been replaced and re-occupied by migrants from northern Albania, where poverty levels are higher.

In northern Albania, especially the inland, north-eastern districts (Tropojë, Pukë, Kukës, Dibër, Mirditë and Mat), there have been two types of out-migration: a high level of internal migration towards the Tirana–Durrës–Krujë region of central Albania; and external migration direct to Italy, Greece, the UK and other destinations. North-east Albania is the poorest area of the country, because of limited employment opportunities and low incomes, which derive mainly from agriculture.

The central region, especially the Tirana–Durrës axis, is the urban and administrative core of the country, containing Albania's largest city and its main port. During 1989–2001 there was an increase of about 45 percent in the urban population of this central region as a consequence of the influx of migrants from most parts of Albania, but especially from the north. Hence the third regional migration trajectory combines strong inward internal migration with emigration flows to the main destinations noted above. This area is also favoured by the embryonic flows of returning migrants from abroad.

Of the three migration regions and regimes outlined above, the Tirana, Durrës and Krujë area is the main focus of internal migration. Within this growing urban region, with the airport at its heart, one can distinguish two main sub-areas: the Tirana–Durrës axis, along which most of the industrial and commercial activities are concentrated; and the peri-urban spaces outside Tirana and Durrës, where tens of thousands of migrants have moved since the first post-communist years. The region is extremely heterogeneous as it encompasses both the richest and some of the poorest and most socially disadvantaged groups of the country, the latter especially associated with peri-urban squatter settlements.

Although their industrial and productive capacities were heavily affected by closure, lay-offs and privatisation, since 1991 the districts of Durrës and Tirana have been attracting both foreign and domestic investment in industry. Here, state apparatuses and, most of all, the construction industry

offer the best and most buoyant employment opportunities in Albania. In the context of the post-communist weakening of state power, the closure and abandonment of large state-managed industrial or agricultural complexes on the fringes of the two urban centres after 1991 gave many families the possibility to relocate from impoverished areas such as northern Albania. The uncertain legal or ownership status of such abandoned land enabled the proliferation of squatter settlements, some of them on dangerously toxic former industrial land. In addition, the districts of Tirana and Durrës have large expanses of fertile arable land, which was also an important factor in the relocation of many rural families to the area. The hope of finding better educational, health, social and employment opportunities encouraged many families to settle in the Tirana and Durrës peri-urban areas by illegally occupying former industrial and agricultural compounds. For those who came from the mountainous north and interior, a more benign climate was also an incentive to relocate.

Further comments on the geographical and demographic impacts of internal and international migration are presented in the next part of the paper (see especially 5.3).

5. Socio-Economic Impact of Migration

The relevance of Albania as a field-study for the exploration of the poverty–migration–development nexus can be illustrated by a few key indicators.

First, there is **the scale and intensity of migration**; some data and a chronology of the out-movement were given in sections 3 and 4. Already in 1995, around a quarter of Albanian families had one or more of their members involved in migration; a third of these had two or more members abroad (Misja and Misja 1995: 225). Migrants were more likely to come from families which were larger than the national average, and generally from rural areas. These figures suggest that it was the most numerous – and thus the economically more vulnerable – families that were first affected by migration.

Second, we can note the **scale of remittances**, estimated in the mid-1990s at \$500 million per year – higher if non-recorded transfers are included. As a result emigration has been a major factor in the financial survival of the country since 1990, and in the maintenance and improvement of the livelihood of Albania's population. A tabulation of IMF data on the percentage weight of migrant remittances against exports of goods and services in 1998 places Albania firmly at the top of the

list of 30 emigration countries (Visco 2000: 21). The Albanian ratio is 154 percent, followed by Jordan at 43 percent, Bangladesh and Egypt 27 percent, India 21 percent and Morocco 20 percent.

A third interesting indicator is provided in a 2002 European Commission discussion document on the migration–development nexus, which puts Albania (along with Mexico and Morocco) amongst those countries which lie in the **'migration band'**. These are countries of low-to-middle income levels (GNP per capita of around \$1,500–1,800) with sustained high emigration which are at present traversing the so-called 'migration hump'. This means that large-scale emigration will continue for some time, but not indefinitely given the generally positive economic indicators.

A full analysis of the impacts of migration – both international and internal – on the social and developmental dynamics of Albania would theoretically involve a lengthy and wide-ranging discussion. The extent of this discussion, however, is limited by the available research and documentation, which are still quite sparse, partly due to how recent the mass-migration phenomenon in Albania is and partly also because of its rapidly evolving nature, so that what might have been true in the early or mid-1990s is no longer the case today. In order to structure our discussion in this section we address four key issues on the socio-economic impact of migration for Albania: remittances, return migration, demographic effects, and some more generalised and speculative comments on the relationship with development and poverty alleviation.

5.1 Remittances

Earning remittances through emigration is seen by most Albanians as the most effective way of coping with the country's very difficult economic conditions and ultimately to escape poverty at the individual and household level (De Soto *et al.* 2002: 39). Albanian migrants working abroad have sent home remittances variously estimated (because of the uncertainty over the volume of unrecorded transfers) to be somewhere between \$300 million and \$1 billion per annum: the country's major source of external income after aid. Put another way, the remittances sent by one Albanian migrant are equivalent to 2.5 times the sum of the average wages of all members of a family (Misja and Misja 1995: 228).

How, then, do Albanian migrants and their families back home use the considerable sums of remittances which flow back to the country of origin, and what are the impacts of these capital flows on individual, household and community development?

The first priority for remittances is the *basic survival needs of the family and an improvement in the quality of accommodation and facilities*. This involves various small projects: moving the toilet indoors; repairing windows, doors and roofs; and buying new furniture and key domestic appliances such as television sets, washing machines and, less often, small electricity generators. In fact the electricity grid is in very poor condition and some families report having access to electrical energy only for an average of 3–4 hours per day. Often families do not have access to water in the house and installing new pipelines with money remitted from abroad is very common. The living conditions for those who do not receive any remittances are very hard (De Soto *et al.* 2002).

Alongside the improvement of the basic living conditions of the household, other priorities are related to the necessity *to secure the respectability of the extended family, by allowing them to celebrate baptisms, weddings and funerals in economically and morally acceptable terms*. These events are hugely important as they mark the history and progression of the family household and are usually the occasion at which different families negotiate and demonstrate their respectability and honour in relation to their immediate socio-economic context.

Thirdly, in some families, remittances are used to finance and invest in *the educational future of children*. In the 'residual families', it is invariably women who seem to have the responsibility for the general and the day-to-day supervision of the education of children, reflecting a gendered subdivision of responsibilities within the household.

Alongside the obvious use of foreign earnings for the purposes listed above, there is a minority of remittances being used to finance *small business projects* (for evidence, see Kule *et al.* 2002; Mançellari, Papapaganos and Sanfey 1996; Papapaganos and Sanfey 2001). Investment occurs mainly in small retail and hospitality family businesses, such as shops, bars, restaurants and tourist hotels. There is some investment in agricultural improvement as well, such as setting up greenhouses, improvement of equipment for cultivation, small fertiliser and pesticide shops for local farmers etc. Other sectors of investments are car garages and construction material production. This contributes to a multi-resource income for the household, which frees them from being entirely dependent on remittances. In these households, contributions may also come from other sources such as pensions, social assistance or wages from work available locally. Recent research has shown evidence of the enduring economic strength and social solidarity of the family

unit, and this inevitably spills over into the economic domain (De Soto *et al.* 2002; King, Mai and Dalipaj 2003).

Generally speaking, the small scale of the remittances available at the micro-level (particularly after living and housing costs have been taken care of), on the one hand, and the lack of infrastructural facilities on the other, pose what are seen as insuperable obstacles to investment. This situation of a limited horizon of business development is more pronounced in the north of the country. Down on the coast and around the main towns of Albania, the prospects for a more productive investment of migrant remittances are marginally better.

5.2 Return Migration

The situation is similar in the case of returnees who might want to invest their savings from their work abroad. As yet, there is not much definitive return migration to Albania. However, those few who have voluntarily returned often find that the amount they are able to save does not generally enable them to invest in the creation of new productive enterprises (but see Kule *et al.* 2002 for a more positive set of findings). The lack of credit facilities and the poor infrastructure are also very important factors preventing Albanian returnees or receiving households from setting up larger-scale productive facilities. Usually, lack of security, political instability and lack of long-term credit are perceived as the most important factors limiting Albanians' confidence in investing in their own country. In addition to reinforcing many of the factors raised above, there is also the unresolved issue of land privatisation and the lack of a unified land registry system which prevents people from using their properties as collateral to obtain credit. Economic growth is also undermined by the absence of productive diversification and specialisation as well as of services supporting production and commerce. The development of new enterprises does occur but it is on a very small scale, and its future progress is hampered by a poor consumer base defined by low incomes and spending capacity, by lack of credit for expansion, and by a lack of basic services such as roads, public transport, electricity, water, packaging etc. It is clear that those very same factors which have propelled Albanians abroad in the first place – poverty, low incomes, economic chaos, lack of infrastructure and reliable utilities – weigh heavily in the decision-making process for those who contemplate a business-oriented return.

A process of return had begun to take place, in the mid-1990s, of people who had been part of the first wave of departures to Greece and Italy at the beginning of the decade, but the pyramid crisis of 1997 and the ensuing political chaos interrupted this trend, and drove many returnees abroad

once more. Now, several years on, with a measure of economic and political stability emerging, there are signs of another phase of return, but it is as yet embryonic. Migrant Albanians believe that much would have to change in Albania before return could be contemplated as a feasible option. Furthermore, one has to distinguish between definitive return, when migrants return and resettle long-term, and temporary returns, notably from Greece, which are short-term interludes between periods spent abroad – either shuttling back and forth to Albania's Balkan neighbour, or moving on to new destinations, such as Italy or the UK. A further distinction can be made between voluntary and forced return: the former takes place out of the free will of the migrant; the latter occurs because of repatriation by the host-country authorities, or because of some other circumstance beyond the control of the migrant.

From the perspective of the 'residual family' and especially of the parents of the migrants, there is often the expectation that their sons will return, generally upon marriage and with the anticipation that they will rejoin the extended family and perhaps start a small business. Family houses are extended and new dwellings built with migrant remittances, precisely with this plan in mind. There is a strong relation of remittances to house-building and the eventual destination of the migrant's trajectory; such investment is related to the main rite of passage to adulthood, marriage. However, as Albanian migration matures and processes of family reunion and settlement take place in the destination societies, the realisation dawns that return might not take place, ever. This leads to a reorientation of migrants' savings and investments towards the host society, and a consequent falling-off of remittances. If houses are still built or enlarged in the home country, they are for family use or for occupation as bases for holiday returns; they become symbolic markers for a final return which may, or may not, eventually take place.

5.3 Demographic Effects

Next, emigration has impacted strongly on Albanian *demography*. Quite apart from the loss of around one fifth of the country's population due to emigration between the censuses of 1989 and 2001, longer-term demographic effects should also be noted. One result of emigration can be detected in the annual statistics on births, which, as we saw earlier (section 2.2), show a rapid decline since 1990.¹⁶ At an aggregate level, emigration has abruptly halted the growth of the

¹⁶ The yearly total for births remained remarkably steady at around 70,000 throughout the period between 1960 and the early 1980s, rising to 82,125 in 1990. Thereafter, dramatic changes occurred. Annual births fell during the first wave of emigration during the early 1990s (to 67,730 in 1993), rose again as temporary economic and political stability led to falling emigration during the mid-1990s (exceeding 70,000 births in both 1994 and 1995), and then fell again with the financial crisis of 1997 which provoked a fresh exodus (60,139 births in 1998). Annual births continued to fall during the late 1990s (to just 50,077 in 2000), probably due to a combination of factors – the long-term behavioural effect of a declining total fertility rate (from around 6 children per woman in the 1950s to 3.3 in 1990 and 2.2 in 2000), and the

Albanian population (refer back to Table 1). Throughout the period 1950–90, the Albanian population grew at 2–3 percent per year (by 3.0 percent during the 1950s, 2.7 percent in the 1960s, 2.3 percent in the 1970s and 2.0 percent in the 1980s). During the 1990s (1989–2001) the population fell by 113,000 (–0.4 percent per year), due to the massive net emigration, whereas birth and death parameters suggest that, with zero migration (as before 1990), the population should have grown by about 500,000.

In the absence of net emigration data by district in the published census results, the regional impact of migration can be mapped in two ways, as we saw in Figures 5b and 5c. First, simple population change 1989–2001 can be plotted. Given that natural change (births minus deaths) remains positive in Albania, total change gives a clear indication of the pattern of out-migration. The national population change during 1989–2001 was a loss of 3.6 percent. As Figure 5b shows, extreme variations occurred around this national figure, ranging from Tirana (+45.2 percent) in central Albania to Delvinë (–54.7 percent) and Sarandë (–45.2 percent) in the south and Tropojë (–37.6 percent) in the north. In general the population losses are higher in the south, where they are reinforced by significantly lower fertility than in the northern part of the country.

The second method (Figure 5c) plots the percentage of the population enumerated in 1989 who were no longer recorded in the same district in 2001. This percentage loss is due to death (but this accounts for only 7 percent of the ‘exodus’) or out-migration, either to another district or abroad. Figure 5c shows an almost identical spatial pattern to 5b. In both the extreme north and the far south, in several districts, more than 45 percent (in some cases up to 66 percent) of the population registered in 1989 were not present in the same district twelve years later. Districts with lower indices – with a greater ability to ‘hold on’ to their population – form a belt across the centre of the country from Tirana through Elbasan to Pogradec, plus the large northern city of Shkodër.

In order to appreciate the regional significance of the migratory movement, it is important to measure it against variations in the density of the Albanian population in its various districts (Figure 5a). This enables us to understand the complex way in which internal migration and international out-migration have emerged as parallel and combined strategies of survival for Albanian households in the post-1991 period, as was introduced earlier – see section 4.3. First, rural–urban migration has accelerated. Although Albania is still the country in Europe with the highest

removal by emigration of many young adults, especially males, during part of their reproductive years. Theoretically, some of this ‘lost’ fertility could be restored if there was a return migration of families with their foreign-born offspring.

percentage of rural population, internal migration has impacted dramatically on the process of urbanisation of Albanian society, the urban population rising from 36 percent of the total in 1989 to over 45 percent in 2001. This has reinforced, at a macro level, the main geographical contrast in Albanian population density, with the majority of the Albanian population historically concentrated in the central and coastal area stretching between the districts of Lezhë in the north and Fier in the south, and comprising at its core the large cities of Tirana, Durrës and Elbasan. In this triangular area, the population density is over 140 inhabitants per square kilometre (Figure 5a). By contrast, the mountainous districts which occupy the northern and southern extremities of the country have historically been sparsely populated, with less than 70 inhabitants per square kilometre. The most thinly populated districts are on the borders with neighbouring countries.

Comparing the maps in Figure 5, it is clear that migration, both external and internal, acts to sharpen existing contrasts in population density, above all because of migration to Tirana and other main urban centres. The sparsely populated rural upland districts, especially in the far north-east and in the south, get further emptied of their limited populations, whilst the Tirana urban region accumulates more people. This happens both via direct internal relocation, and indirectly, by emigration abroad and return.

What is perhaps more worrying *is the selectivity of the population loss*, demonstrated by our earlier analysis of Figure 4 (see section 3.2). Hence, emigration accelerates the ageing of the Albanian population: the proportion of the population aged less than 15 years fell from 33.0 to 29.3 percent during 1989–2001, whilst those aged 65 or over rose from 5.3 to 7.5 percent. An equally significant change has taken place within the working-age population: in 1989 the ratio of 15–34 year-olds to 35–64 year-olds was 1.5:1; by 2001 it had drastically fallen to 1:1.

The importance of migration as a survival strategy is reflected in the absence of young males from the households. Most of the households are composed of women, children and elderly people. Amongst the females are often the wives of emigrant sons, since the wife becomes a member of the husband's household according to the virilocal nature of Albanian customary law.

Key social problems arising from *age- and gender-selective out-migration* are family separations and the abandonment of many older people. Many wives and fiancées are separated from their emigrant husbands and partners. Children suffer, too, from the absence of their fathers. But perhaps the most serious problem concerns older people who have lost their family and social

support. Although Albanian custom obliges the youngest son (and his wife!) to take care of his parents in their old age, this tradition is breaking down through emigration. Abandoned by their emigrant children and with declining social support and pensions in the new neo-liberal Albania, many older people, especially in isolated rural areas, are becoming lonely 'orphan pensioners' (De Soto *et al.* 2002: 46).

5.4 Migration, Poverty Alleviation and Development in Albania – The Future

Migration has been significant in its impact on alleviating poverty in Albania. Several pieces of recent research and survey evidence in various parts of Albania confirm this link (De Soto *et al.* 2002: 39–47; King, Mai and Dalipaj 2003: 93-98).

What is less clear is the relationship between poverty alleviation (through migration and remittances) and further migration. Is there a 'demonstration effect' whereby migration stimulates further migration as the evidence about improved quality of life (better food, clothing, housing, appliances etc.) becomes visible to other households? Or do migration and return create the economic conditions whereby emigration becomes less necessary? Based on detailed observations in southern Albania, Nicholson argues that remittances are a means of development, leading people not to migrate, especially when returnees are able to micro-finance new initiatives such as improved farming techniques, shops and other services (Nicholson 2001, 2002).

However, recent research carried out mainly in northern and central Albania, and interviews with migration experts and other key informants in Albania, suggest a certain degree of scepticism about migration and remittances functioning as an equilibrating mechanism staunching further migration, at least in the short term. This scepticism is based on the following observations from recent research prepared for Oxfam (King, Mai and Dalipaj 2003):

- The economic, social and cultural environment for 'development' is still unpropitious in Albania, especially in rural areas and in the north of the country.
- Agriculture remains a devastated and disorganised sector in which, apart from isolated local initiatives, it is difficult to foresee returnees and their capital finding good investment opportunities. The rural sector is handicapped by poor or non-existent infrastructure (lack of irrigation, power, roads etc.), tiny farm holdings and the lack of a land register. Moreover, there are very few agricultural processing, packaging and marketing systems, and competition from imported food is a further disincentive to Albanian agricultural development (Oxfam 2003).

- There is an overall deficit in adequate infrastructure – water, electricity, communications, public transport etc. – making any kind of private enterprise difficult to initiate for returnees.
- As far as migration to new destinations (e.g. the UK, North America) is concerned, the recency of this migration (mostly within the last 4–5 years) means that there are few returnees as yet. Returns from Italy and Greece, where Albanians have been migrating since 1991, are more common, but still not widespread, due to the poor economic conditions in Albania. Especially from Greece, returnees intersperse periods back home with absences abroad.

6. Key Gaps in the Literature, and Suggestions for Further Research

We close this review paper by identifying gaps in the literature on Albanian migration and its relationship to development; these gaps then become questions and hypotheses for possible future research.

Our first point is an obvious and general one: *the need for further research* – hardly surprising seeing that we are dealing with a contemporary migration process which is still less than fifteen years old. Albanian migrants suffer from what appears at first sight to be a paradox: they are under-researched yet over-represented in the media – especially in Italy and Greece, but increasingly now in other parts of Europe as well, where the criminalising discourse of Albanians has become dominant. On closer inspection, this paradox disappears: their being under-researched and over-mediatised are part of the same coin. There would be fewer, and less stigmatising stereotypes if objective research evidence about Albanian migration was more widely available.

Second, it is clear that the *historical dimension* of Albanian migration constitutes a major gap in the literature. Studies of Albanian mobility within the Ottoman Empire and during the period between Independence (1912) and the establishment of communist rule (1944) are indeed few and far between (Nicholson 1999b). Such studies of pre-communist Albanian emigration, and of the more restricted internal mobility during the communist period, are important for two reasons. First, research on these earlier migrations and mobilities is limited and so much remains to be discovered.¹⁷ And second because, as we have tried to indicate in our earlier account (section 3.1), there are clear links across the long communist interlude which suggest that both external and

¹⁷ In fact early Albanian migrations were often 'hidden' because they were, for various reasons, viewed under the guise of Turkish or Yugoslav migrations (Blumi 2003).

internal migrations were built upon the foundations of earlier patterns. Further cross-period studies which made the nature of these historical linkages more explicit would be a productive line of investigation, not only for overseas migrations to the United States or Australia but also for destinations closer at hand.¹⁸

A third key area for further research involves more work on the *evolving dynamics of emigration, return and circulation*. It is true that some research – reviewed in this paper – has been carried out, but much remains to be done, partly because the nature of Albanian migration has changed and diversified, and partly because the research to hand does not yet give convincing answers to important research questions. There is also a methodological point we wish to make here. Existing research from field studies in Albania tends to be polarised between, on the one hand, small-scale village studies where too much weight is laid on individual cases and anecdotes (e.g. Nicholson 2001, 2002) and, on the other hand, extensive questionnaire surveys where the questions asked are too general, simple or superficial and where the methods used to administer the survey are insufficiently clear (e.g. Kule *et al.* 2002). Often, it seems, students are used as interviewers, and their training for such a task is rarely made explicit. In our view, the need exists for more rigorous field surveys involving carefully chosen sampling strategies (communities, households, individuals etc.) and a clear attempt to triangulate findings from quantitative and qualitative data. Research questions we think need further clarification include the following:

- How are different types of migration evolving, and what are the implications of each mobility type for household/family development, and for the wider-scale development of communities, regions and the country as a whole? These different types of migration can be classified in two ways: by socio-economic and demographic status (low-skill, professionals, students, males, females etc.), and by temporal factors (commuters, seasonal migrants, temporary worker migrants, long-term settlers etc.)
- Will Albanian migrants return, and who will return? At what stage will they come back, and what are the conditions for their return? What impacts will different types of return have in different locations within Albania? In particular, what are the prospects for returnees to finance, either directly or indirectly, the development of small and medium businesses; what kinds of businesses; and with what economic and employment impacts?

¹⁸ Hatziprokiou (2003), for instance, has noted that some contemporary Albanian migrants in Thessaloniki have moved there because of pre-existing, pre-communist links and movements between the two cities.

A fourth set of research issues surrounds *internal migration* and its interface with international migration, as well as with the ongoing process of modernisation/development in Albania. Little has yet been written on the dynamics of internal migration in Albania, although, as with external migration, evidence exists to suggest some continuity in patterns of relocation across the transition from the communist period to post-communist internal migration.¹⁹ On a wider front, and within the context of the neoliberal economic regime of the 1990s and 2000s, how do internal migration, external mobility, return, and market forces interrelate to create a new economic and social geography of Albania with new marginal groups and peripheral spaces within the country (cf. Fuga, 2000)?

Three further research topics can be suggested, based on lack of attention paid to these issues thus far in the literature. First, it is important to examine the *differential impacts of emigration* on different population subgroups such as *children and older people*, especially those left behind in Albania when other cohorts (young adults) migrate. Second, work has hardly yet begun on the specific migration experiences of *ethnic minorities* within Albania, above all *the Roma* who are now, in the post-communist era, the most vulnerable segment of the population (Koci 2001). Finally, Albanian migration needs always to be analysed as a *gendered process* in which the experiences for men and women can be (and in the Albanian case, usually are) highly differentiated. Preliminary evidence from Italy (reviewed by Bonifazi and Sabatino 2003) and from the UK (King, Mai and Dalipaj 2003) suggests that Albanian migration tends to follow a 'traditional' gendered pattern, pioneered by men with women, and sometimes children, following through family reunion. But other gender dynamics also need to be uncovered, particularly where they have involved exploitation of women and a blocking of migration's potential emancipatory role for women.

¹⁹ The publication by the Albanian Institute of Statistics of a research report on internal migration (INSTAT 2004) is a useful first step in rectifying this situation. The report, based on 2001 census data and comparisons with 1989, came out just as the present paper was about to be published.

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