

## The Migration's Consequences in Albania after 1990

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### Abstract

Migration is one of the most prominent phenomena in these ultimate years. It has brought some consequences, such as the concentration of population in major cities and the economic development, but also a number of social problems too. The change of political and economic system in Albania after 1990, put Albanian society in front of a series of phenomena. Democracy in Albania gave way to the free movement of people. This paper is focused on issues such as: economic-financial difficulties, unemployment, forced child labor, spread of deviant behavior, lack of shelter, dropout, perturbation of the nature element.

**Keywords:** Migration, democracy, social problems, deviant behavior, nature element.

### Introduction

The change of the political regime in 1990 brought some changes in the Albanian social life, such as: the transition from a centralized economy into a free market economy; the movements of the population (migration and emigration) were strictly controlled by the government, but after the '90s there were no obstacles to control or prevent the chaotic migration and emigration movements. The changes, which happened rapidly, found the Albanian society unprepared after 45 years of isolation by the dictatorial political system. Albania was one of the most isolated countries in the world and the this momentum of transiton generated new legal and cultural norms, which were not entirely assimilated in their real sense. The society thought that: "Democracy provided unlimited individual freedom, in every aspect." In this sense, this paper refers to migration in Albania after the 90's and the social problems that derived from it; as well as the challenges/efforts of the Albanian society to be integrated into this new economic and political system. The research is based on the method of observation, interviews and analysis of data.

### Reasons of mass migration in Albania

The rural exodus of the population in Albania is attributed to the suffocating model of inequality of the socio-economic level of districts, inhabited centers and branches of economy. So, life in the countryside or in small towns was very hard, due to the jobs' profile (agriculture, livestock, mining, etc) and flawed service sector. The flow of migration toward cities and more developed regions, mainly including Tirana, stems from the inherited economic-territorial imbalances, profounded even more from the economic instability and decline (Shtëpani, 2007, 262).

That part of society, which for years lived and worked in rural areas, with the discourse of

free movement, realized that they could be transferred to areas with more opportunities of employment in other sectors of the economy, with higher financial benefits, with institutions of public services, but at the same time those areas provided a richer life in social and recreational activities. The rural population moved rapidly towards urban areas and mainly towards the Tirana-Durrës segment, in response to low income they provided from their farms, limited opportunities for non-agricultural activities as well as the low level of infrastructure and public service (Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, January 2011).

Rural demographics of migration “emptied” rural areas of Albania, especially North highlands, which are amongst the poorest, because of the cold climate and rocky soil composition, and also due to the underdeveloped road infrastructure. Most of the inhabitants in these areas earn their living by farming, which constitutes an important source of daily food consumption in rural families. However, most of them do not have enough land, or it is not so fertile as to enable a sufficient variety of products for home consumption, and many families try to cultivate the agricultural and livestock products which provide them with food, and also those that the climate and terrain allows them to cultivate.

### **Positive consequences of migration**

Migration as a phenomenon occurs with the aim of producing positive effects on the migratory party as well as on the hosting party. Urban migration, includes that part of society, which is qualified or possesses the skills which the labor market in urban areas has high demands for. When the number of migrated people coincides (is equilibrated) with the number of demands for employment, then migration would be an integrative phenomenon, positive for both parties. The migrated are usually employed in sectors and jobs that are not covered by the area's population. These may be sectors that require highly skilled specialists, that are not in the area, or jobs in the service's sector, which in most cases as everywhere are covered by migratory population. But ,when migrating movements are massive and not balanced with the demand in the labor market, then this process will be accompanied with disturbing consequences both for the migrants and the host side.

Large migratory movements that took place in Albania, can not be seen only as chaotic spontaneous processes, but also as positive processes, because they basically consist in the human desire for a better life, by moving toward centers more developed . The new arrived people in major cities, especially in peri-urban (peri-urban areas lie on the out skirts of large urban centers) had a positive impact on urban economic development (Tirana, Durrës, Fier, Vlorë etc.), the house building sector, industry of construction materials.

Migratory movements have been a big help for females/women,for the significantly affect, the emancipation of the society, as the part of today's changing in architecture of Albania. Migration is changing gender relations within and outside of the country and some studies conclude that migration is a process of emancipation for Albanian women and girls (General Directorate of Employment, 2012, 2). Gender equality is a corner stone in the process of democratic development of a nation. To set this stone where is needed, it is

necessary to take into account all gender inequalities, that today are typical for the family, community, labor market, and Albanian society in general.

### **Negative consequences of migration**

The phenomenon of migration in Albania, contributed positively to the development of various sectors of economy, as I mentioned above, but on the other hand was accompanied by a series of negative consequences, which may be classified into three groups according to interest groups.

### **Consequences for the migrated people**

Different classes of the migrated population in urban areas (heads of families, women, single parents, orphans, etc) found themselves in unbalanced situations, in front of many painful sociological phenomena in search of their new positioning in society. Many popular existential problems of contemporary society as anxiety, fear, despair, depression, suicide, sadistic aggression or introversion which are being faced in Albanian society are primarily related with the fact of how the persons build their relationship with themselves and society (Tushi, 2009, 239). Migration in Albania during the '90-s, began as a social and rural demographic exodus and was the most important in the period of remaking Albanian urban and rural areas. During the transition the annual growth rate of Tirana's population was 12%, 1.5% of which consists of natural growth of population and migration of 10.5%, 7 times higher than natural growth (National Conference on Development and Population, 1996, 59).

Many social and cultural consequences are created by this shift, disrupting old ties of kin, and creating "massive population areas" in previously uninhabited places. The phenomenon of mass migration, which occurred after the transition in Albania, created many social problems in areas where migratory population was settled. The poor, the unemployed, disoriented people, alcoholics, people with limited social mentality, victims of prostitution are not just isolated individuals, but undoubtedly social groups whose social dimension has been "damaged", and therefore do not feel themselves as part of reality (Tushi, 2009).

In many peri-urban areas of Tirana, large districts like "Bathorja, Kodër-Kamëz, Babrru, Shkozë, Bregu i Lumit there is a heterogeneous population with many problems such as:

- a) the major part of boys and men work "black" all over Albania;
- b) the majority of houses are not registered;
- c) the number of unemployed is very high;
- e) families with low income.

Most residents of peri-urban areas consider unemployment as their top concern. In most cases only one member of these families is able to find a job, but this job is temporary and intermittent.

## **Consequences for the government and local authorities**

After this “boom” of migrants from rural areas and small towns (economically undeveloped), the suburbs/outskirts of major cities of Albania turned into informal areas, creating a lack of necessary conditions for a normal life for the newcomers such as water, electricity, roads, schools, clinics, sanitation etc. Unique aspects of urban sociology as a specific field of research were determined by issues arising from the administration of subsidies from the local government of the city, such as housing, transport, education, health and welfare services (Castell, 1977, 73). One of the socio-economic consequences of rural movements, was the phenomenon of mass unemployment and extreme poverty. The flow of migration and concentration of population in major cities occurred because the structure of rural-urban residence is characterized by uneven/unequal social economic development and the increasing number of young population for work was accompanied with a disequilibrium in the labor market (the offer was many times higher than the demand for labor). An economy in transition, in crisis, with severe traumas, which brought political instability in unconsolidated institutions and with an economic reform that brought more deformities than stability, finds it too difficult to completely resolve the problem of poverty, no matter the social and statal committment (Tushi, 2006, 241).

As the economy in Albania is mostly rural and informal, and revenues are not accurately measurable, measurements based on this income would provide a distorted estimate of poverty.

## **Consequences for the society**

The growth of urban population in Albania, was not accompanied by the increase of the urbanization level, which expresses various socio-psychological and economic aspects of urban life, the pattern of urban personality and behavioral adaptation to the social environment and civic life. Under these circumstances, the growth rate of population in cities is associated with economic difficulties and civic life discrepancy, accompanied also with problems such as crime and deviance, infringement of rules by citizens and local authorities, violation of hygiene, public safety and order, etc. The migration of rural population to large urban areas, also implies moving away from the local environment, which is the site of the social relations interaction, where limited spatial extension enables greater stability of such relations. This “Rural exodus” brought:

- a) displacement of a part of citizens or rural population towards new areas of residence or employment;
- b) “demographic depopulation” of the poorest and the most backward provinces;
- c) ‘replacement’ of the local population as a result of former residents of old urban areas leaving, and the arrival of a “new population”;
- d) “demographic concentration” of rural population in suburban areas of small towns, or areas of large urban cities and their suburbs.

“Rural exodus” “dissolved” the close kinship, which constituted a more stable social

organization, where family ties although often becoming the focus of tension and conflicts may also create links where you can rely on structuring actions. In industrialized societies first and foremost, as well as in the world generally, to a certain extent, we have reached the period of developed modernity, where we can observe freedom from the fixed traditional links or from what for too long was a “preponderance point” for those who were “inside” the family, group, neighborhood, city or state (Giddens, 2013, 177).

During this process, the Albanian family experienced an upheaval. The role of head of the household (i.e. father) declined, and social deviances led to the destruction of traditional families and were at the same time accompanied with the destruction of old tribal ties. Reflection of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are monitored and recreated on the basis of input, (external information that comes from social practices that are more current rather than old), this performance transforms their nature (Giddens, 2013, 37).

Poverty is another consequence that causes mass migration. Its impact is relatively different in urban and rural families. Poverty in rural areas is more easily handled and better than in urban areas. People in rural areas solidarize with each other, having easier provision of food. In urban areas, family members do not have the same cooperation due to the characteristics of city life. A household is considered poor if its level of expenditure per person falls below a minimum level necessary to meet basic needs for food and non-food items of the individual. This minimum level of consumption is known as “poverty line” and represents the point of separation between the poor and non-poor people.

Absolute poverty expresses a lack of basic resources needed to maintain health and normal functioning of the body. Relative poverty expresses appreciation of the differences between the living conditions of some groups and those that the majority of the population enjoys. This poverty came, not only from the immediate increase of population, but also because of the “inversion” of the labor market; because the labor market was “designed” for the number of population these urban areas had until that time. “Outrageous” and chaotic urbanization threatens urbanization, and there emerge “cities” where violence and revolt are displayed. They are sources of crime, drugs, prostitution, gambling, alcoholism, jeopardizing not only material goods, but also the future of the society, because there is no order and civil way of life. Therefore, there is a negative way of acting, and a universal phenomenon is created: urban and civil disintegration. One of the determinants of poverty is family size, low levels of education, unemployment and the main socio-demographic factors, especially among newcomers to “new urban” areas. Low levels of poverty, are a result of “rural” mentalities of newcomers mainly in large urban areas. They are not interested in the “involvement” into the social and democratic life of the country, but in their communities (of new comers) where most of the heads of household with primary school, consider involvement in social community “as something that is outside of their family “. The problem of poverty and unemployment is not limited to urban settlements. Poverty is caused by the uneven development of the economy (rural-urban) or even by the change of the political and social systems, that happened in Albania after the ‘90s. Unemployment in higher levels, increases the number of population with income below the poverty line. Poverty is a urban problem, because there is a large concentration of slums in big cities, and the city as a space form shelters for a great number of poor people.

In a country like Albania, gender-based discrimination culture is not simply a matter of violating women and girls' rights, but gender inequality represents a serious obstacle for accelerating the reduction of poverty. Traditionally, women bear the brunt for wellbeing in the family, however they have fewer opportunities than men when it comes to control resources and tools needed to fulfill these responsibilities (OSCE Report in Albania, 2008, 20).

### **Consequences for the environment and nature in urban areas**

Overcrowding is a consequence of the massive migratory movements, where the consequences become apparent as in the "distortion" of the elements of nature and architecture. Dimensions of the natural environment and green environments in the center and suburbs "are shrinking" more and more giving way to new multi-storey buildings, and roads to make the newly created neighborhoods functional. Overcrowding causes "unintentional" pollution in 3 directions: increase the amount of waste from daily consumption of urban society, the increase of noise, typical for urban areas, the increase of amount of harmful gases into the atmosphere from the vehicles, like: physical pollution (waste from consumption), noise/acoustic pollution and atmospheric pollution. The problem of urban overcrowding comes from the fact that while the city expands on the outskirts it also invariably "expands" in the center (Shtëpani, 2007, 262).

The waste from consumption, often in suburban neighborhoods is dumped at every possible location near apartments, because there are no special waste sites, or in the worst case are burnt. City Planning is presented at its lowest levels. Construction in most cases, in the suburban areas is informal, so you can observe a diversity of models in the apartments next to each other, which makes you clearly understand the effect urban "mess", where beside a multistory building there are two or three-story houses; or houses next to each other change a lot in their appearance. So there is a distinctive mess in the constructions according to the inhabitants taste, without respecting the criteria of Urban City Planning.

### **Conclusions**

Migration in Albania, contributed significantly to the integration and raising of the standard of living for a part of the society, giving them the possibility they had been denied for years by the political and economic system of the past. It also helped the economic and urban development of some areas. On the other hand, since it has a massive nature, it was also accompanied by negative effects for some specific groups of migrated people, serious consequences in city planning distortion and pollution of the environment and nature in urban areas. "The Suburb" of the society consists, in the sociological aspect, of all those social layers which are in a poor economic cultural and psychological state, because of the fact that this society is constituted of individuals who are unemployed, who have just arrived in the urban areas, but are not welcomed. They are inhabitants of the territories that are economically ruined and empty, sick, members of families with many children, pensioners, people who have inadequate vocational training, colored people, owners or employees in secondary economic sectors or peripheral to the national economy (Fuga, 2004,13).

## Recommendations

In order to succeed in the post-migratory reforms, the social services, municipalities and the stateshould should become more responsible. The increase of demands to get social support is an expression of the growth of poverty in these areas and represents growth of the 'Industry of Mercy' (Guliani, 2002, 157). Social categories that should benefit most social services are individuals and families with the lowest and insufficient financial income such as:

- girls who finish primary school;
- children who drop out of school;
- minors who work;
- unemployed women;
- violated women;
- disabled children;
- mistreated, abused children;
- young who use drugs.

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