

IMISCOE Working Paper

**ALBANIAN MIGRATION AND
DEVELOPMENT:
STATE OF THE ART REVIEW**

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Preface

We are pleased to introduce this State-of-the-Art report on Albanian migration as an IMISCOE Working paper. It is the first – and very swift – product of the ‘Targeted Third Countries’ (TTC) initiative, financed by the European Commission, as a special twinning link between the IMISCOE Network of Excellence and the Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Tirana, which thereby becomes a full member of the Network. The TTC initiative has a dedicated budget to support research development and training activities in Albania and adjacent countries of the Western Balkans in the field of migration. The research and training programme extends for two years until 31 March 2009.

We appreciate both the timeliness and quality of this State-of-the-Art review, which has been endorsed by the two undersigned as directors of the Centre for Economic and Social Studies and the Sussex Centre for Migration Research. SCMR is the ‘twinning partner’ of the IMISCOE consortium with particular

responsibility for liaising with CESS in the building of a sustainable infrastructure for research within Albania and its neighbouring territories.

The paper's author, Julie Vullnetari, is a final-year doctoral student at SCMR. As she hints in her own introduction, she is uniquely placed to unite this overview. She herself has 'lived' the Albanian emigration, being the first young female to leave her village in the early 1990s. She has both the 'insider' knowledge of the rather extraordinary phenomenon of post-1990 Albanian emigration, and the expert tools of the migration scholar to analyse the migration process from historical and theoretical perspectives. With her knowledge both of the Albanian-language literature and the international literature in other languages, the report can justifiably claim to be the most complete review of Albanian migration to date. Moreover, the paper is not limited to the post-1990 international migration: Vullnetari also examines the lesser-known early history of Albanian emigration, and she tells the story of the large-scale internal migrations that have characterised the past 17 years. In this way she weaves together a sophisticated analysis of historical (dis)continuities, interrelations between internal and international migration, and their combined links with Albanian development.

This Working Paper is also seen as a building-block towards a fully-fledged book on Albanian migration which will be published as a culminating output of the Albanian network of scholars of which ourselves are delighted to be part.

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Introduction

This paper documents Albanian migration¹ and its contribution to development through a review of the existing literature. The account is by no means exhaustive, particularly since the data for the pre-1945 period are limited. However, the purpose of the review is not only to analyse and explain various elements of the migrations, but also to highlight the importance of their historical (dis)continuities. This paper, being an original account, aspires to be a ‘state of the art’ on Albanian migrations, in the sense that it presents the most complete review of Albanian migration available to date, including substantial reference to Albanian-language sources. In addition, both international and internal migration are analysed together; previous accounts have described them as separate phenomena. The links between these two migrations have become more the rule than the exception in the Albanian context and their analysis needs therefore an integrated approach. Finally, the analysis is enriched by the author’s own direct knowledge and experience of the phenomena under study; she ‘lived through’ and had her own experience of Albanian emigration throughout the post-1990 years, and hence is able to nuance her analysis with this ‘insider’ knowledge.

The paper starts with a brief background account of the country, in order to situate the understanding of Albanian migration on a wider geo-political platform; these elements are also present throughout the account. It then continues with a historical perspective on early Albanian international and internal migration until 1945. This is followed by a discussion of both these types of migration during the communist rule: 1945-1990. Contemporary international and internal migration are then discussed: this section is structured around migration statistics, typologies and patterns, as well as destinations, migrants’ profiles, their lives and experiences. In a subsequent section elements of these two types of migration are pulled together to analyse their links, dynamics and impacts with regard to development in Albania. In a final section the literature related to return migration is reviewed. The paper closes with some insights into the changing dynamics of Albanian migration and development through the diaspora and transnational activities.

1. Albania – some background notes

Most history books about Albania conclude that the history of Albanians is one of battles and wars, trying to survive and preserve their ethno-national identity in the face of a succession of foreign invasions and occupations. Five centuries of Ottoman rule starting from the 14th century left their mark on every political, social and cultural aspect of the life of Albanians, combined in a legacy of general backwardness and divided territory (Logoreci 1977). The last country to gain its independence from the crumbling Ottoman Empire in 1912, Albania’s territorial

¹ This review focuses primarily on the migration of Albanians from the Republic of Albania. However, perspectives on the migration of Albanians living at present outside this territory, but not considered as migrants or diasporas, have been taken into account, mainly in the context of movements during the Ottoman period.

integrity was not finally confirmed until 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 some significant improvements in education were achieved and the country became more stable. However, relying heavily on clan support (especially in the northern districts of Mat and Dibër), enlisting the interests of big landowners (of the South), and to some extent preoccupied with self-preservation, Zog failed to resolve the question of land reform, and the peasantry remained impoverished (Vickers 1995: 124-6).

Although Zog did lay the foundations of the Albanian nation-state by bringing some form of national unity, Italy exercised increasing influence over Albanian affairs during the later years of his rule, and the country was already *de facto* an Italian protectorate by the time that Italy invaded in 1939. The Italian occupation lasted until 1943, when Italy surrendered and German forces took over. 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 to this for various reasons that are beyond the scope of this paper; hence the communists eventually prevailed. Having successfully ousted the Germans in November 1944, the communists seized power and Enver Hoxha was installed as the country's new leader. He ruled 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, banned private property and foreign investment, and created a state-controlled socialist society. However, some positive achievements were recorded in eradicating illiteracy and increasing access to free health care. Although claiming to be economically self-reliant, this was in fact more a goal to be reached through a different strategy, which did involve a significant amount of foreign aid, albeit from 'sister' socialist countries (Becker 1982). However, Albania's relationship with these countries was fickle and resulted in the country's complete isolation. Albania broke first with former Yugoslavia in 1948, then with the former Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc in 1961, and then lastly with China in 1977. A three-metre, high-voltage fence was installed along the land border with Yugoslavia and Greece and attempted emigration was regarded as an act of treason, punished by death or lengthy imprisonment. The militarisation of the country's landscape was completed by thousands of mushroom-shaped concrete bunkers scattered throughout the territory. Through this isolation, Hoxha's regime was able to evade international scrutiny on its human rights record, which was abysmal throughout these years (Hall 1994). Internal mobility was also tightly controlled through an elaborate and highly discriminatory system of administrative measures. Most of the population was fixed in rural areas providing labour for collectivised agriculture, whereas the towns were centres of basic services or industry. According to Hall (1996), *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). These demographic facts

are emphasised here because of their obvious background relevance, especially given the explosive nature of rural-urban migration and of Tirana's growth after 1990.

After Hoxha's death in 1985, and reflecting some of the changes that were taking place in neighbouring communist countries, the successor government headed by Ramiz Alia started to loosen its grip. However, the reforms were too little, too late. In the winter of 1990 and early 1991, popular student protests forced the government into democratic elections. These dramatic changes, and the general political and economic chaos which took place at this time, are the context which framed the large-scale migration of Albanians after 1990: confirmation of the fact that the history of Albanians was not only one of wars and battles, but also one of migrations. It is to this aspect of Albania's history that we now turn.

2. Early Albanian migration until 1945

Although this section gives the impression that it refers for the most part to international migration, it deals substantially with internal migration as well. These two migration types are integrated here for three main reasons. First, populations were not organised in the form of the modern state administrative structures we experience today; territorial boundaries where the Albanians and other peoples lived were often obscured and being constantly reclaimed. Second, the distinctions between the two types of migrations become blurred when considering such moves under the Ottoman Empire. Third, many of the reported reasons for both types of movements tended to be similar.

Written accounts of pre-1945 Albanian migrations are very limited, and the statistics quoted here should be treated with caution. This material is often part of history books or travel accounts, written primarily by foreign scholars or travellers. One of the most serious attempts to summarise these migrations has been made by Tirta (1999).² Another, much more concise, historical account of Albanian migrations is that by Barjaba *et al.* (1992). Other work relates to individual host countries (see de Rapper 2000 for Albanians in Turkey; and Federal Writers' Project 1939; Demo 1960; Nagi 1988 for Albanians in the USA), or is limited in geographical and historical coverage (e.g. Gruber 2003 on the Albanian census of 1918).

At different times in their history, Albanians, like other peoples, have emigrated as pastoralists, seasonal workers, traders, seamen, conscripts in different armies etc. Labour migration has occupied a central role not only for Albanians,

² In his monograph 'Albanian migrations', Tirta (1999) summarises previous work he had published during the 1970s and 1980s on these issues. In a detailed ethnographic account of international and internal labour and forced migrations of Albanian people, Tirta presents migration figures, destination places, living and working conditions of migrants, reasons for migration etc. by situating these in a socio-economic and historical analysis. Although he mentions migrations from the Middle Ages, his special focus is the period between the Albanian National Renaissance and the struggle for independence (1845-1912). It is arguably the most thorough and complete work on the subject to date.

but for all Mediterranean peoples (Psimmenos and Georgoulas 2001: 9). Equally, forced migrations have accompanied the wars and fighting which have tormented relationships in the Balkans for centuries. The earliest Albanian settlements abroad concern the two neighbouring countries of Italy and Greece (Myres *et al.* 1945: 182). During the 14th and 15th centuries mass migrations of Albanians to Greece and Italy took place as a result of wars and occupations, particularly the Ottoman conquest of the Balkan peninsula. Probably the earliest mass migration in the collective historic memory of Albanians took place in the second half of the 15th century, after the death of Albania's national hero Skënderbeg in 1467. His death and the capture of his stronghold in Krujë, northern Albania, signified the fall of Albanian lands to the Ottomans. His wife and young son fled to Italy and settled in the Kingdom of Naples. They were accompanied and later followed by a large number of Albanians, principally from noble families, who had participated in the resistance against the Ottomans. Others fled north to the Dalmatian coast and south to Greece. It is estimated that around 200,000 Albanians fled their homes during 1468-1506 (Tirta 1999: 97). Barjaba *et al.* (1992: 514) suggest that this figure was almost one quarter of the Albanian population of the time, 'an exodus of Biblical proportions'. It is interesting to note that this proportion is similar to that of modern-day Albanian migrants abroad by 2004.

Five centuries under Ottoman rule, which ended with the declaration of independence in 1912, were accompanied by different types of migration to yet more destinations. The reasons for these migrations were varied and complex but they fall roughly into two broad categories: those characterised by an element of coercion (forced migrations) and those characterised by a search for work and better living conditions. However, this distinction becomes blurred when one considers the conditions of extreme poverty, exploitation and misery in which many Albanians, especially peasants, lived in their areas of origin.

2.1 *Forced migrations and displacements*

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. Forced recruitment, particularly the practice of *devshirmé*,³ caused individuals and entire families to flee their homes, primarily for Italy, but also later for the USA. Those who resisted the Ottoman central authority (Sublime Porte) were persecuted and exiled (Skendi 1967). In the 1830s Boué (quoted in Barjaba *et al.* 1992: 516) observed that 'entire villages of Albanians had been exiled in Asia in order to crush the revolts'. During the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, several initiators and activists of the Albanian movement for national independence were persecuted and murdered by the Ottoman authorities. Those who managed to escape fled to the USA, France and the newly-created Balkan countries. Yet other individuals and families had to flee as a result of blood vendettas, exploitation and feuds between local chieftains and lords. Mass forced migrations of Albanians continued especially after the Russo-

³ Also known as 'child levy'. According to it, Albanian rural Christian families were required to give up a healthy male child to be converted to Islam and later trained to either work in the administration or become part of the elite Janissaries corps (Vickers 1995: 12).

Turkish war of 1877-78, when the Treaty of San Stefano (1877) gave new lands to four newly independent countries: Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece, including territories inhabited exclusively by Albanians (Federal Writers' Project 1939: 34). As a result of the violence that ensued, considerable numbers of displaced Albanian Muslims living in these territories were driven away from their homes and fled to other parts of Albania, but also to Turkey (Logoreci 1977: 40; Vickers 1995: 29).

Albania's emergence as the last independent Balkan country in 1912 and the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 were accompanied by continued forced displacement of the population living around the contested new borders, as successive treaties attempted to establish boundaries for the new Balkan states. Almost one third of Albanian populated territories was lost to its neighbouring countries of Serbia, Montenegro and Greece, whose governments waged ferocious campaigns to expel Albanians living there.⁴ Figure 1 shows the configuration of present-day Albania in respect to neighbouring states, and the key features of physical geography and the main towns. Because of the incursion of the Greek army in the Albanian border regions of the south-east during 1913-14, entire villages fled for safety towards central and coastal Albania. During this time around 70,000 of these internally displaced people settled in Vlorë alone, but many more were on their way to reach the safety of coastal destinations (Durham 2001: 291-2). Under the population exchange agreement between Greece and Turkey, as part of the Lausanne treaty in 1923, many Albanian Muslims from border areas in Greece (Florina, Kastoria and Ioannina) were sent to Anatolia, Turkey. Others who were excluded from this agreement – mostly Chams, the occupants of the north-western part of Greece known as Chameria (or Thesprotia as it is known to Greece) – were persecuted and forced to flee by the Greek authorities of the time (de Rapper 2000: 4; Vickers 2002). Some of these refugees simply crossed the border into Albania, but many more fled to Turkey and settled mainly in Izmir. Almost the entire remaining Muslim Cham population was forced to flee Greece after 1944, particularly during the Greek civil war in 1946-49, as they were accused of collaborating with the Italian and German occupiers during the Second World War (Tirta 1999: 13; de Rapper 2000; de Rapper and Sintès 2006). They fled to Albania, but also to Turkey and North America.

2.2 Labour emigration

Besides forced migration, Albanians also vigorously pursued emigration themselves. A considerable number of them migrated for work internally as well as abroad, both within the Ottoman Empire territories but also overseas. In the aftermath of the fall of Albanian-inhabited areas to the Ottomans, these territories simply became a 'decaying and isolated backwater of the Ottoman Empire' (Vickers 1995: 10). Under conditions of grinding poverty, famine, health epidemics, economic exploitation and heavy taxation, attempts to ensure better economic resources and a better quality of life resulted in widespread emigrations. These led from mountainous areas to lowland and coastal areas; from rural to urban areas; but also abroad. In spite of reforms on land ownership carried out

⁴ Tirta (1999) provides an in-depth account of these expulsions during these years.

towards the end of the Ottoman rule, the situation of peasants was abysmal, exacerbated by the extortionate interest rates charged by money-lenders. At the end of the 19th century these reached 20-35 percent in urban areas and up to 40-70 percent in rural areas (Tirta 1999: 145). Logoreci (1977: 65) describes this situation well: '[t]he peasants were gradually bled white by tax collectors, landlords and moneylenders. By the end of the 1930s many of them were reduced to penury'. As peasants sold their small pieces of land to pay off their debts, the agriculture of entire regions, particularly in the south-east of the country, risked total destruction. Under such circumstances many left the village to seek work in towns. But work in towns was becoming hard to find, and so the next step to emigration was taken (Pollo and Puto 1981: 108).

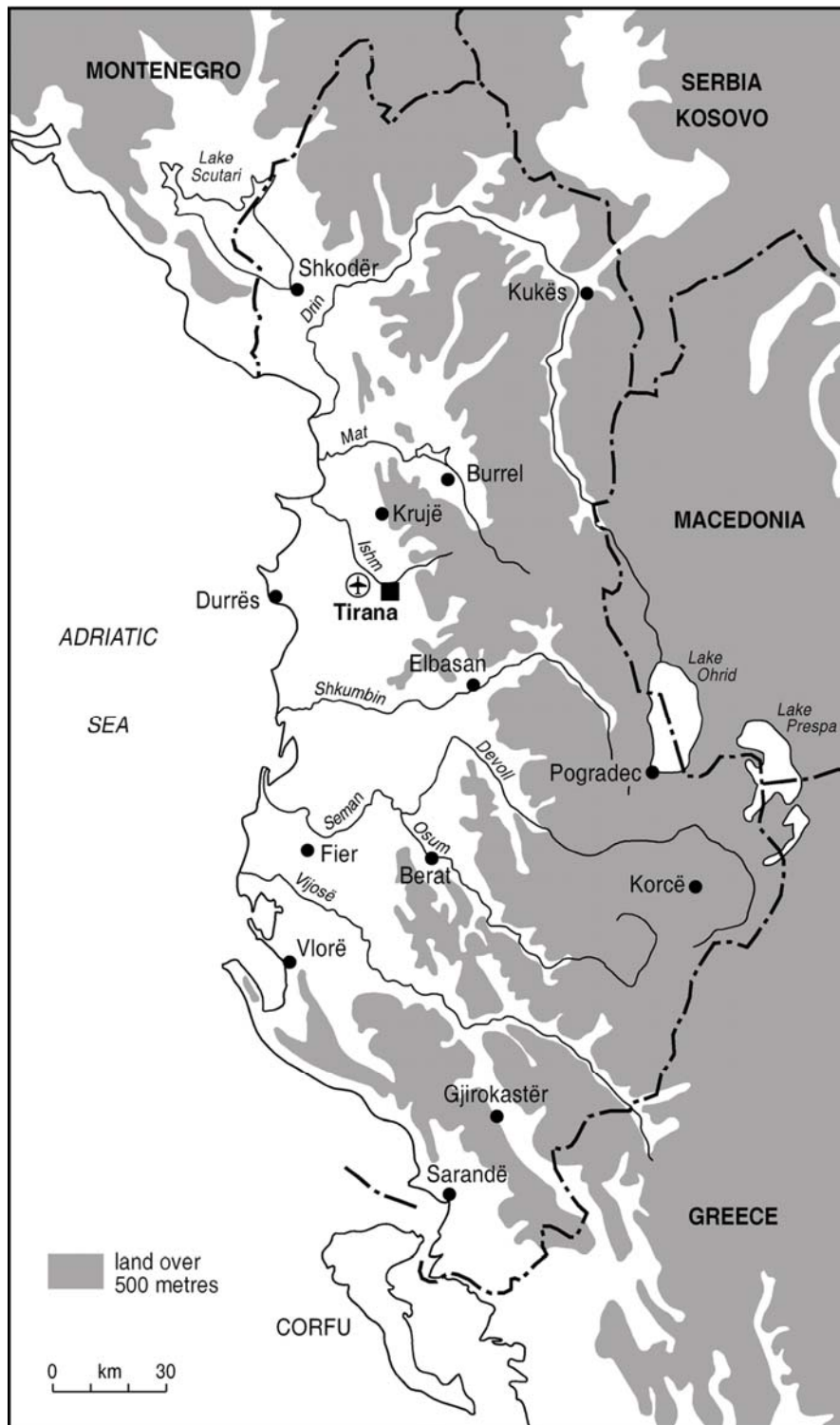


Figure 1 Albania Location Map

Extreme poverty might have been the reason for internal and regional movement, but it functioned as an impeding factor to longer-distance migration. In general, those who moved to other countries were seeking better employment opportunities and were for the most part semi-skilled and highly skilled men. Many craftsmen such as masons, road-builders, carpenters, ironsmiths and goldsmiths

emigrated for seasonal work throughout the Ottoman territories (Tirta 1999). This emigration became permanent later on, as they were joined by their families. Other skilled men emigrated to various parts of the Ottoman Empire intending a career in the administration, army, or in professions such as medicine, the law etc. Many Albanian men rose to occupy important positions in the Empire's administrative and military ranks. At least 30 Grand Viziers (prime ministers) were of Albanian origin, ruling in different corners of the Empire. 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 the abdication of King Farouk I in 1952, who was reportedly of Albanian ancestry (Logoreci 1977: 34; Hall 1994: 49).

Labour emigrations intensified by the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, influenced by the global political and socio-economic situation. As several countries in Europe and North America were undergoing rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, Albanians made use of these new opportunities and the rising demand for labour. With progress in transport and technology, emigration to more distant lands became feasible for some Albanians too. They migrated to places such as Russia, North America and Australia, where they took up employment in big factories, and worked less in their traditional occupations. This opened up opportunities for the less skilled to emigrate, although financial capital was an even higher obstacle for these long-distance emigrations. As such, most passage money for distant emigration was financed by loans which were later paid after the migrant arrived abroad. In the first years of the 20th century, at least 95 percent of Albanians who immigrated to the USA financed such trips from the moneylenders in their native villages. Exorbitant interest rates, blackmail and extortion usually turned these finance undertakings into 'racketeering' schemes. However, as chain migration started to develop, early migrants financed the emigration of their family members and relatives later on (Federal Writers' Project 1939: 7).

A last but very important point in the context of these migrants' profiles is their gender. It is often mentioned in accounts documenting aspects of early Albanian migration that forced migrations and displacements involved entire families. However, labour migration, particularly in its early stages, overwhelmingly involved male labour migrants as the principle initiators of the migration process. Most accounts mention how females were left behind to mourn the separation from their male relatives. If they emigrated, these females did so almost always as dependents of their male migrant relatives abroad. Apart from some figures, not much is revealed about female migration in accounts relating to this period of time, with only very scattered remarks here and there.⁵ An interesting exception is the very rich ethnographic account of Albanian migrants to the USA by the Federal Writers' Project of Massachusetts, Boston (1939), which dedicates a few pages to a gendered and generational perspective of the migration and integration processes

⁵ The evocative picture of an Albanian woman who had just landed in Ellis Island in 1905, adorned the cover of an exhibition brochure for the Fuller Museum of Art, Boston, USA in Spring 1998. The 'Albanian Woman with Head Cloth, Ellis Island' (1905) taken by photographer Lewis Hine, is a magnificent piece of ethnographic treasure, as it depicts her traditional clothes and is a rare record of early Albanian female migration. Many thanks to Mr Van Christo, Executive Director of the Frosina Information Network (www.frosina.org) for drawing the author's attention to this photograph and for his assistance with other materials relating to early Albanian migration to the USA. Some of these materials can be found by visiting the Frosina website.

of these immigrants in America. This account describes the role of female migrants as home-makers for their men upon arrival in the new country, and as preservers of tradition and the memory of homeland. Although some change took place over time in gendered and generational relations, the customary Albanian perceptions of women's and young people's roles continued to be practiced widely (Federal Writers' Project 1939: 100-10): generally the Albanian woman was still not expected to express opinions, she was still 'unobtrusive' and did not vote. A few other scattered remarks tell of a handful of professional women who became very active in public life, usually setting up ladies' societies and financing charity projects in Albania: the Qiriazis sisters from Korçë who emigrated to the USA, were the most prominent figures (Demo 1960; Nagi 1988).

2.3 Destination countries and figures

With regard to destinations, Italy and Greece have been important host countries for Albanians for centuries. Albanian settlements formed in 1444, 1464 and 1468 could be found in Sicily and South Italy (Myres *et al.* 1945:182), peopled by soldiers who had settled in Italy after having fought for the House of Aragon from around 1430 (Armillotta 2001). These were later joined by Albanians fleeing the Ottoman conquest, as noted earlier. Alfonso, King of Aragon rewarded the Albanians for siding with him in the war for control of Naples by allowing them to settle in the seven regions of Southern Italy: Campania, Apulia, Molise, Abruzzi, Basilicata, Calabria and Sicily (Vickers 1995: 9). These settlers became known as the Arbëresh, and their descendants have been able to preserve the Albanian language and traditions through five centuries.⁶ Many Albanian-Italians were later to emigrate to the Americas (USA, Argentina etc.) at the beginning of the twentieth century, where they would form part of the larger Albanian diaspora there (Hall 1994: 50; Tirta 1999: 141).

A similar situation can be observed in Greece. Albanian-speaking shepherds, peasants and seamen were living in Aetolia, Attica and the Morea, and even moved into the adjacent islands of Euboea, Andros, Hydra and the Spetzes within living memory (Myres *et al.* 1945: 182). Tirta (1999: 139) estimates that in the 1930s there were around 400,000 Albanians in Greece.⁷

However, during the time of the Ottoman Empire other areas within the imperial domain became important, especially Turkey, where an Albanian presence is noted from the beginning of the Turkish conquest (de Rapper 2000: 3). Conservative estimates suggest that in 1928 some 250,000-300,000 Albanians lived

⁶ 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 (Barjaba *et al.* 1992: 515; Hall 1994: 50; Vickers 1995: 9; Dymi 2002; Tirta 1999: 141). For an in-depth study of one of these 'Albanian' towns, Piana degli Albanesi in Sicily, see Derhemi (2003).

⁷ This number includes the Arbërorët (early Albanian emigrants who fled there in the aftermath of the Ottoman occupation, also known as Arvanites) and Albanians living in their homes in Chameria.

in Turkey, 60,000 in Istanbul alone (Pollo and Puto 1981: 108; Tirta 1999: 139).⁸ Other countries, such as Romania, Egypt, Bulgaria and Russia (in that order), received Albanian labour migrants and refugees. Although settlements did form, these were not as significant as in the other countries mentioned above.⁹

As the Empire crumbled, other, more distant destinations such as the Americas and Australia became the preferred emigration places for Albanians. Although the USA became the most important destination in the Americas, Albanian settlements were created also in Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Mexico etc.¹⁰ The first Albanian emigrant to the USA is said to be a man from the city of Korçë, south-east Albania, who arrived there in 1876, but soon left for Argentina (Federal Writers' Project 1939: 5; Nagi 1988: 33).¹¹ The second man was also from the Korçë region and in his mid-twenties. His arrival in the USA sometime in the mid-1880s was to become the beginning of a considerable chain migration as fellow-villagers followed him there, their imagination and desire set on fire as he spoke of the wonders of America (Demo 1960: 8; Nagi 1988: 35). These were no strangers to emigration though, as they had all worked previously in other Balkan countries. The first flow of immigrants that followed was from Korçë and other areas of southern Albania, predominantly Orthodox young men who emigrated for work and hoped to return home after they had made some money. As one emigrant stated: 'to work as much as we could, to spend as little, and to send the rest back to Albania was our holy trinity' (Nagi 1988: 36). However, during the period 1904-14, Albanian refugees from the Balkan wars outnumbered labour migrants (Roucek 1945: 234). Hence, at the end of these wars Albanian migration to America was reversed, as a constant flow of returnees marked especially the spring and summer of 1914 (Federal Writers' Project 1939: 54). This return increased after Albania's independence was put on a more secure footing at the end of WWI. Between 1919 and 1925 around 20,000-30,000 Albanians from all walks of life returned from the USA, bringing their savings with them (Federal Writers' Project 1939: 65). However, disappointed with the first years of independent Albania, the political machinations and the economic difficulties encountered there, at least a third of these returnees re-emigrated after 1920 (Federal Writers' Project 1939). Nagi (1988: 51) classifies this as 'the second large scale immigration of Albanians to America', during which entire villages were deserted except for a few old people, as men took their wives and children with them (Federal Writers' Project 1939: 67). This shifted the pattern from a male-dominated to a family-dominated emigration. Indeed, between 1920 and 1930 the emigration of married and single young women of marriageable age from Albania to the USA exceeded that of men (Federal Writers' Project 1939: 68). Before this

⁸ These statistics include Albanian refugees from Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, as well as Florina, Kastoria, Chameria and other Albanian-inhabited territories which became part of Greece. The internationally recognised spelling 'Kosovo' rather than Kosova or Kosovo/a is used throughout this paper, without inferring any political stance on the issue.

⁹ Tirta (1999: 140) estimates that Romania was home to about 20,000 Albanians in 1920, Egypt to about 10,000 towards the same time, whereas the numbers for the other countries are only a few thousands.

¹⁰ Tirta (1999: 141) estimates around 40,000 Albanian immigrants in Argentina, the majority of whom were second-wave migrants from the Arbëresh communities in Italy.

¹¹ Many thanks to Reverend Arthur Liolin, of the Albanian-American St. George's Cathedral in Boston, USA, for his assistance with literature, contacts and other useful insights into the early Albanian migration to America.

time, according to Mr F. Konica (Konitza) a Harvard graduate and the Albanian minister to the USA during Zog's government, 'out of 100 Albanian men only 15 had wives in America; that from the total of some 30,000 American Albanians, only 1,000 were women'. Of course, the conservative opinions in Albanian society towards women played a key role, as did the character of the initial Albanian male migration which was intended to be of a temporary nature for the purpose of saving money. However, Roucek (1939a: 333) reveals another interesting element by arguing that female migration was prohibited by various Albanian governments until the late 1930s, in order to 'sustain the much needed increase in the population', which had been severely damaged during the preceding wars and by emigration.

Most of the early emigrants to the US had a rural background and only a minority had received education – only 20 out of 5,000 emigrants in 1906 could read and write Albanian (Nagi 1988: 46). Lack of capital and a desire not to be attached to America meant that these early young male migrants did not take up farming, but turned to the factories of industrial America for work; textile mills, shoe factories and metal works needed cheap unskilled labour which these immigrants could provide. However, a minority worked in hotels and restaurants and fewer still had small businesses such as food stores or sold flowers on the streets. They lived together in tenements in the slums of cities. Most of these early immigrants led a miserable existence, working only to send money home or save for the day of permanent return. According to some scholars who have studied this period of Albanian migration, immigrants travelled frequently back and forth between Albania and America during this time,¹² as well as from city to city within America itself (Nagi 1988; Trix 2001: 8). The centre of the Albanian diaspora became Boston, although later on important communities formed in other cities and states. Albanian immigration to the USA was predominantly from southern Albania and involved overwhelmingly Orthodox Christians. It was not until 1912 when the Ottoman Empire disintegrated, and especially following the devastation of entire villages during the incursion of Greek forces into south-east Albanian border areas in 1913, that Muslim Albanians emigrated in significant numbers (Federal Writers' Project 1939: 42; Trix 2001: 8). Unlike the first-wave migrants, those of the second-wave phase arrived with the intention to make America their permanent home. At least three important indicators testify to this. First, there was the migration of entire families and young women as future brides, as mentioned earlier. Second, this was followed by large-scale purchase of property. And third, the figures on naturalisation show that, whereas in 1920 only around 6 percent of male Albanian immigrants had naturalised, in 1930 this figure had reached almost 30 percent (Federal Writers' Project 1939: 100). By 1945 Albanian Americans had progressed into better jobs as their rates of literacy had also improved; perhaps half of them were working in services and hospitality establishments, often self-employed in small family-run businesses. A very small number became lawyers, doctors, and other such professionals. Throughout these years, kinship and social ties had remained important factors in the migration and integration of these immigrants into the American society.

¹² Personal correspondence [26 February 2007] with Dr. Dennis L. Nagi, Prof. Emeritus, Albany, NY, author of *Albanian-American Odyssey* (1988), New York: AMS Press. Many thanks to him for very valuable insights into the early Albanian migration to the USA.

Emigration to the USA reached its peak in the late 1920s and early 1930s, in spite of the immigration quotas and restrictions imposed by the authorities after 1921. These restrictions only applied to the 'second-wave' (male) migrants who initiated their migration during the inter-war period. The 'first-wave' migrants – those who had already emigrated to the USA at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century – as well as their family members were not affected by such regulations (Kaser and Radice 1985: 86-7). Quota-exempt family members such as wives, children and less often the aged parents of principle male migrants formed the bulk of Albanian immigrants after the 1930s (Federal Writers' Project 1939: 87). Emigration to the USA continued with different scales of intensity until 1945, when Albania's borders were sealed off by the communist regime. By the end of the 1930s the numbers of Albanians in the USA were estimated between 35,000 and 60,000, including the American-born children (Federal Writers' Project 1939: 5), and by 1945 this number was estimated more precisely at around 60,000 (Myres *et al.* 1945: 131, 182-3).

Much less is known about the Albanian migration to Australia, although there are intriguing scattered remarks in Charles Price's (1963) monograph on Southern Europeans in Australia (see also Hall 1994: 51-2). Even though rather small-scale, this migration is important because of its link with the 'new' 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 tiny when compared to the one in the US – 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 US case, emigration to Australia started around 1885 (ADFAT 2003). Arriving on board Italian, Greek and French ships, presumably together with nationals of these countries, they first landed in Freemantle, Perth (Carne 1979).¹³ Emigrants were predominantly young men in their late teens or early twenties, had little education, were from rural backgrounds, and came in search of work. However, unlike in the USA, most of these emigrants were employed in the rural sector. They started out in bush-clearing upon arrival in Western Australia, but later on headed east towards areas where rural settlements were expanding around new rural industries. A good number found jobs in the state of Victoria: in farm labour in the Werribee district, south-west of Melbourne, and around the fruit-growing districts of Shepparton. Some settled and bought farms here, whilst others moved north into Queensland, where a variety of rural jobs in the sugar and maize farms, as well as in the cotton and tobacco industries were available throughout the year. Agricultural labour and rural settlement were pursued by Muslim emigrants, most of whom came from the rural areas around Korçë, Bilisht and Pogradec in south-east Albania. In contrast, the Orthodox Christian emigrants, mainly originating from the Korçë and Gjirokastër areas,

¹³ A reason for this could have been that tickets to this town were cheapest. Most of this subsection on Albanians in Australia is based on Carne (1979), unless otherwise referenced. Many thanks to Mr Albert Kello, Business Development Manager for the Queensland Trade and Investment Office – Europe, based in the UK, himself of Albanian-Australian roots, for his valuable help with Carne's paper, and other useful insights into the early Albanian migration to Australia.

engaged in urban occupations and thus settled in towns upon their arrival in Australia.

Migration to Australia continued throughout the first decades of the 20th century with various degrees of intensity. Its increase after 1920 has been partly attributed by some authors to the knock-on effects of the introduction of stricter immigration rules in 1922-24 in the USA (Carne 1979: 12; Hall 1994: 51). Indeed, a number of emigrants in Australia had previously emigrated to the USA. Although the peak of emigration to Australia was reached between 1924-28, this does not involve large numbers, and certainly much lower figures than those reached in the USA (just over 1000 persons, nearly all men – Carne 1979: 12; ADFAT 2003). By 1933 the community had decreased somewhat, but the male/female ratio was still seriously unbalanced with 766 males to just 4 females. However, this would change in the late 1930s when, similar to the US case but several years later, a shift is noted in the pattern of migration, as many Albanians in Australia, especially in the Shepparton area of Victoria, were joined by their families. This is now where the largest Albanian community in Australia can be found.

Other emigration destinations for Albanians at this stage included other Western European countries such as France, Belgium, Austria, Germany, Switzerland etc. and places as far away as Africa (Madagascar and South Africa) and South East Asia (Tirta 1999: 132-3).

It is difficult to estimate total numbers involved in the pre-1945 Albanian migration, but some indications are given by the census data and other documentation of the time. Thus, Bërxfholi (2005a: 69-70) estimates that more than 20,000 Albanians emigrated abroad between 1921-23, whereas between 1923-45 this figure was more than 150,000, which constituted 13 percent of the country's population in 1945 (UNDP-Albania 2000: 35; Bërxfholi 2005b: 170). The most intensive period seems to have been 1930-45, when almost 100,000 people emigrated abroad (Bërxfholi 2005a: 70).

2.4 Impact on communities of origin

Whilst it can be said that almost all regions of Albania experienced some form of emigration before 1945, it is the south and south-east of Albania that are by far the most important areas of origin (Tirta 1999: 146). Particularly affected were the highlands of Korçë, Devoll, Përmet, Kolonjë, Pogradec, Sarandë, Gjirokastër and Vlorë (UNDP-Albania 2000: 35; Bërxfholi 2005b: 170). Very few emigrants were recorded from the north, although some authors believe that some parts of central Albania were also affected by out-migration (Sjöberg 1992a: 35; also Aslund and Sjöberg 1992).

These pre-1945 emigrations had significant impacts for their source areas on a micro-level (for the families of migrants), on a meso-level (for the communities of origin) and on a macro-level (for the country generally). However, the effects of these impacts were mixed and complex. From a demographic point of view, the emigrations of these times are considered to have had a destructive effect on all these levels. Those who emigrated were in the majority men and almost all of working age, between 16-40 years old. Most of them never returned and thus never created families in Albania. In certain regions with high emigration

levels only women and the elderly were left behind. Wives and children of those who were married also suffered separation for years, if not forever. Women would wear black attire, as if they were in mourning. They were, in effect, widows, having 'lost' their husbands to emigration. When the whole family emigrated abroad, hopes for return were even more remote and so the emotional distress associated with it was even higher for the remaining kin. People would cry over those who left as if it was an occasion of death, as in practical terms they would probably never meet one another again. Such an act of emigration to distant and foreign lands, for long periods of time, principally for work, came to be known in the Albanian collective memory and folklore as *kurbet* (Tirta, 1999). Originating from the Turkish *gurbet*, the word means 'out in the world', but is powered by notions of suffering, sacrifice, loss and despair. Many Albanian *kurbet* folksongs, proverbs, narratives and even place names tell of these various aspects of *kurbet*, not least the traditional gendered division of labour encapsulated in the well-known proverb that '[A] man becomes a man out in the world, a woman becomes a woman over the cradle'.¹⁴

Besides these demographic and social effects, emigration, particularly overseas, stripped entire villages and regions of their labour force, including the most energetic, practical and innovative people. *Kurbet* became an obstacle for the development of the country, its industry and craftsmanship, and the urban areas could not develop to their full potential (Tirta 1999: 166). The depletion of manpower at the peak of its physical efficiency due to overseas emigration was in fact a pattern that was observed throughout Southern and Eastern Europe at this time (Kaser and Radice 1985: 89). Emigration of some of the most gifted and ambitious men in search of careers in the Ottoman military and civil administration also created a serious political and cultural vacuum in the country. The impact would be felt during the struggle for national recognition later on (Logoreci 1977: 18).

However, emigration also became a motor for economic and socio-cultural progress in Albania, by bringing in much-needed money through remittances, and more open societal and democratic norms. Financial remittances enabled migrant families to have a level of living above that which could be sustained locally (Federal Writers' Project 1939: 82-4; Myres *et al.* 1945: 140; Carne 1979: 12). In 1910 Fan Noli, an Albanian political émigré of Kolonjë origin (south-east Albania) and a Harvard graduate, estimated that around 30,000 Albanians living in the USA were sending home about 3 million dollars a year; 'almost all Toskëria [another name for southern Albania] lives off remittances sent from the USA' (Tirta 1999: 141). It is estimated that in 1928 remittances were around 10 million golden francs (Tirta 1999: 164). But, following the Great Depression, their volume decreased to 7 million francs in 1930 and below 4 million francs in 1933 (Barjaba *et al.* 1992: 521). Besides raising the living standards of individuals and families, remittances played a considerable role in the national income structure of the country as a whole (Federal Writers' Project 1939: 82-4; Roucek 1939b: 86).

Emigrants also brought back skills and knowledge which they applied in Albania, such as methods of cultivation of agricultural produce, including vineyards and orchards; building and construction of houses; hygiene; organisation of

¹⁴ For more on *kurbet* and its gendering as related to post-communist migration, see Papailias (2003).

villages; family and social relations etc. Much of the country's modernisation during the reign of King Zog is attributed to return migrants, particularly from the USA (Roucek 1946: 532). Comparing areas of high emigration to those with low emigration reveals a difference also in the level of education. For instance, the 1945 population census reveals that 39 percent of the population of Korçë and Gjirokastrë Prefectures knew how to read and write, as opposed to only 10 percent in Dibër Prefecture in the north of the country (UNDP-Albania 2000: 36). Being exposed to and in contact with many progressive ideas of the time in the host countries, emigrants became transmitters of these ideas and experiences about economic, social and political organisation. Albanian migrant associations in Bucharest, Sofia, Istanbul, Cairo, Boston etc., became important political vehicles in the struggle for independence and territorial unity of Albanian-inhabited territories. Transnational ties amongst these communities, and in turn with Albania itself, were maintained by a core of renowned men (and a handful of prominent women) who championed Albania's cause to foreign Powers. Other hometown associations contributed to the development of their villages and cities of origin by investing in education, building schools, bridges, roads, town halls, communal water taps, cemeteries, printing and distributing books, helping the poor etc. (Federal Writers' Project 1939: 82-4; Roucek 1945: 238; Barjaba *et al.* 1992; Tirta 1999; UNDP-Albania 2000: 35; Ragaru 2002). Women migrants also formed their own organisations and contributed actively in similar projects as above (Federal Writers' Project 1939: 126; Demo 1960: preface, 15; Nagi 1988: 53). However, once migrant communities started settling, these organisations turned their attention to integration in their host countries (Carne 1979; Barjaba *et al.* 1992; Tirta 1999; Nagi 1988). Although ties to Albania were maintained, they were weaker and qualitatively different from before.

2.5 Internal movements

Internal movements in Albania's historical past have been shaped by the socio-economic and geopolitical circumstances of the time they took place in. From time immemorial Albanians had mountains as well as lowland valleys as their abode. These latter were however at greater risk during times of wars and battles, causing population movement towards the safety of mountainous and hilly terrain. In times of peace, the population of the mountainous areas would move in the opposite direction. New villages would be created and old ones expanded, often around key points along major routes. Much of this internal movement was regional in character. For instance, people from the highlands of Has and Mirditë (north of Albania) would move down to the Plain of Dukagjin (Rrafshi i Dukagjinit); or those from the mountainous areas of Devoll (south-east Albania) would move down to the adjacent river valley etc. (Tirta 1999). Gruber's (2003) preliminary analysis of the 1918 Albanian census data points in a similar direction. According to these results, many people in the cities of Shkodër and Durrës had moved there mostly from surrounding areas – from Podgorica and from south-east of the city to Shkodër, and from Kavajë and Tirana to Durrës. Seasonal migration, especially of those involved in animal husbandry, was usually the precursor to more

permanent moves. These intensified in the first decades of the 20th century (Aslund and Sjöberg 1992; Sjöberg 1992a: 27).

Thus, in addition to rural-rural migration, rural-urban movements were also taking place at various times in history, as urban centres waxed and waned. In the 17th century for instance, Berat counted 5000 families, Shkodër 3000 families, Elbasan 2000 families, and there were 1500 families in both Prizren and Gjirokastër. In the 18th century, the town of Voskopojë flourished, reaching a population of 40,000 inhabitants and enjoying an exceptional cultural and commercial development.

Up to the early 20th century, according to Tërta (1999: 78), rural to urban migration had been traditionally towards three directions:

- old urban centres such as Shkodër, Elbasan, Berat, Gjirokastër, Korçë, etc. which experienced intensive economic growth due to strong ties with trading and commercial centres near them and in neighbouring countries;
- some newer urban centres where trade and artisan activities experienced growth, because of their position at important national and international crossroads, such as Fushë-Krujë, Bilisht etc; these centres gained population which moved there from their rural hinterland; on the other hand, their very position at crossroads exposed them to war and robberies;
- administrative centres of communes and districts such as Tepelenë, Sarandë, Delvinë, Kukës etc. which were close to other major urban centres and became destinations for many migrants; these later became important trading and commercial centres.

Most of the above-listed urban centres were located in mountainous terrain. Movement towards and settlements in most of the coastal areas did not become significant until well into the 20th century, as they were mostly low-lying marshland and were thus prone to malaria epidemics (Tërta 1999: 62). Malaria was endemic in all areas below 1000 m and was particularly severe in Vlorë, Elbasan, Kavajë, Durrës, Tërta and Berat (Myres *et al.* 1945: 122-4). Between 1928-1935 the Rockefeller Foundation assisted in marsh-draining around Durrës and Tërta, which reduced the incidence of malaria and made these areas more attractive to settlement (Myres *et al.* 1945: 192). A further effort at land reclamation was made by the Italians during the reign of King Zog and after their occupation of the country in 1939. WWII brought this to a halt with the result that by 1946 almost 70 percent of the population was affected by malaria (Borchert 1975: 178).

Very similar socio-economic and political factors as those referred to above (section 2.2 on emigration) affected internal movement as well. Alongside agrarian issues, other factors were the emergence of capitalism accompanied by development of industry, trade and communications, which were however still in their infancy (Pollo and Puto 1981: 107). And of course, the relative peace that ensued in the country after WWI must have been an important contributing factor to this population shift (Sjöberg 1992a: 27). Between 1923 and 1945, the urban population grew by more than 80 percent as compared to less than 30 percent population growth experienced in rural areas (Laçi 1997: 60; UNDP-Albania 2000: 46). Some scholars argue that internal migration and its effect on urbanisation remained limited until 1938 (Sjöberg 1992a: 35). They suggest that between 1939-45, especially during the Italian occupation, urban growth quadrupled as compared to the previous 15-20 years (Sjöberg 1989: 106). The contributing factors given are

continuing difficulties in the agrarian sector, industrial and tertiary expansion in towns and presumably the effect of the guerrilla war (Sjöberg 1992a: 35, 51). Of equal importance is also the issue of *which* urban centres benefited from this growth at this time. Old urban centres, which were mostly in mountainous areas with harsh climates, started losing importance. For instance Shkodër, the most important city in Albania until the mid 19th century, with between 40,000-45,000 inhabitants around this time, had slightly more than half that number a few decades later (Karaczay 1842: 64; Pollo and Puto 1981: 107; Tirta 1999: 89). Meanwhile, urban centres in the coastal areas of the western plain, especially Durrës and Vlorë, experienced impressive population growth (Sjöberg 1992a: 27). A comparison of the figures of the first censuses of 1910 to 1918 with those of 1945 for populations of some key urban areas highlights these important population changes (Table 1).

Table 1. Population figures for Albanian towns, 1910-18 and 1945

| City (census year) | Census 1910-1918 | Census 1945 | population change |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Tirana (1918) | 10,225 | 59,950 | + 5.9 x |
| Durrës (1918) | 4,175 | 14,183 | + 3.4 x |
| Vlorë (1910) | 4,934 | 12,716 | + 2.6 x |
| Sarandë (1913) | 110 | 1,520 | + 13.8 x |
| Korçë (1913) | 15,453 | 24,602 | + 1.6 x |
| Shkodër (1918) | 23,099 | 34,335 | + 1.5 x |
| Berat (1918) | 9,006 | 11,911 | + 1.3 x |
| Gjirokastër (1913) | 11,590 | 9,371 | - 1.2 x |

Source: data extracted from Tirta (1999: 89, Table 17).

As can be observed, the most significant increase of population (proportionally) takes place in Sarandë, with a 1945 population almost 14 times higher than that of 1913, although insignificant in terms of population volume.¹⁵ However, in 1945 Tirana emerges as the most important city in Albania with almost 60,000 inhabitants. Korçë and Shkodër are the only two older cities which continue to experience some growth and still retain their importance (see also Sjöberg 1992a: 27-8 for a similar analysis). Tirta (1999: 88) also suggests the effects of return migration from abroad, whereby return migrants of Korçë origin for instance settle in the more affluent cities of Tirana and Durrës: an interesting prelude to some current migration patterns, as we shall see later in this paper.

In spite of this rapid growth of urban centres, in 1945 Albania was still a rural country, with almost 80 percent of the population living in rural areas (Sjöberg 1989: 106; Bërxfholi 2000: 20; UNDP-Albania 2000: 46). Although rural-urban migration continued during the communist regime, urban growth was artificially slowed down as internal movements were strictly regulated, as the next section shows in more detail.

¹⁵ The low figure from the census of 1913 should be considered in light of the historical developments of that year, during which much of the hinterland of Sarandë, Korçë and Gjirokastër was annexed by Greece.

3. Migration during 1945-1990

Albania emerged from WWII an economically devastated country. The power vacuum created after the withdrawal of German forces from Albania was swiftly filled by the communist group, who consolidated their position as the leading political force in the country. Albania embarked on the road to socialism, framed within a political ideology of self-reliance, isolation, strong nationalism, but also class warfare and ruthless purges of dissident opinion. The reconstruction of the industry and the national economy, yet strict controls over urbanisation; the retention of rural population, yet a high birth rate accompanied by a growing impoverishment of villages; a worsening of the gap in living conditions between rural and urban areas; all were crucial factors of influence that framed the policy of the state as well as the migratory trajectories of many individuals and families during this time. Overall, this period is characterised by an increasing control over internal movement and a ban on international migration, as we shall see in the following sub-sections.

3.1 Internal movements

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. A number of studies on population growth and movement in Albania existed during this time, primarily from Albanian scholars within Albania, but these were of course influenced by the ideology of the political system in place. Only very few scholars outside Albania had access to (reliable) data and thus were able to produce independent accounts and analysis of these processes. The data and studies available from this period suggest that internal migration in Albania took place more than conventionally thought. Internal movement during the first two decades of post-war Albania continued unabated, following a pattern similar to that which had been established during 1923-45, as outlined in the previous section. For the first five years, rural-rural migration was predominant, as can be concluded from comparing the 1945 and 1950 census data; the latter reveals a slight decrease in the share of urban population as a percentage of the total population. This could be explained in part by the Agrarian Reform of 1945-46, which resulted in a more extended private land tenure, as small-holders and landless peasants received plots of land confiscated from the large landowners, foreign companies and religious institutions. During the same time large areas of arable land were reclaimed from draining the Maliq marsh and bringing other lands under irrigation. Sjöberg (1992a: 52) also suggests the restructuring of the economy as a further contributing factor. The next five years (1950-55) experienced the highest urban population growth of the communist period – more than 50 percent – compared to only 4 percent for rural growth. The urban share of the total population went up from 20 to 27 percent for those respective years (Borchert 1975: 183; Bërxfholi 2000: 27). Bërxfholi gives two reasons for this growth: intensive rural-urban migration and the administrative change which brought the number of

urban centres from 24 in 1945 to 37 in 1955. The census of 1960 registered an inter-censal (1955-60) urban growth of 31 percent, which, although lower than that of the previous five years, was still considerable; 80 percent of this growth was attributed to rural-urban migration (Borchert 1975). Hall (1994: 68) notes that about 130,000 rural-urban migrants moved between 1950-60, representing 40 percent of rural areas' natural population increase for this period. The share of urban population by 1960 was at almost 30 percent of the total population and the number of urban centres had grown to 41 (Bërxfholi 2000: 32-3). The establishment of these new urban areas, places such as Ballsh, Kurbnesh, Laç etc., and the expansion of existing ones such as Tërana, Fier, Elbasan etc., were the result of the rapid development of industry and transport (UNDP-Albania 2000: 47). This of course resulted in an increased demand for labour, which was met by in-migration. According to Bërxfholi *et al.* (2005: 70) rural-urban migration intensified following the creation of cooperatives (1956-60), a process during which peasants saw their land appropriated by the state without compensation. The demographic effects for some land-locked mountainous regions were dramatic. Much like emigration at the turn of the 20th century, the main contributors to the internal migratory movements of the 1950s were from the southern districts of Kolonjë, Përmet, Gjirokastër, Sarandë, etc. (Sjöberg 1992a: 47). In some of these districts, fewer people lived there by 1960 than before the war (UNDP-Albania 2000). See Figure 2 for a map of the 36 Albanian districts, the names of which will be referred to frequently in the remainder of this paper.

However, from the early 1960s onwards the Albanian authorities pursued a policy of *rural retention and minimal urbanisation*. This policy was enforced primarily through the introduction of instruments which can be categorised in two groups. The first group includes 'pro-rural' and 'pro-upland' schemes aimed at improving life in rural areas (Sjöberg 1994). These included the institution of minimum old-age pensions, investment in rural areas etc. Sjöberg (1992a: 58-9) however contends that most of these measures were either taken for *all* segments of the population, or were designed with other policy agendas in mind. Furthermore, they do not seem to have been very effective in staving off rural-urban migration, since, in spite of the government's efforts, equalisation of living standards between urban and rural areas was never achieved. He argues that it is the instruments in the second group that were most important and effective in curbing urbanisation. These administrative restrictions, forming what he calls the 'anti-migratory system', contained laws, decrees and rules passed as early as 1958 (Sjöberg 1994). Many of these simply involved 'legal prohibition on migration' and included, among others: permission to change domicile (to leave one's domicile), or *leje e shpërnguljes*; urban residence permits or *leje banimi*; the system of awarding dwelling permission or *pasaportizim*; as well as labour force planning; housing; and food rationing.¹⁶ The consequences of these measures were that rural-urban migration was brought to an almost complete stop in the early 1960s. Urban growth for the 30 years that followed was slow and insignificant, in spite of a further increase in the number of centres categorised as urban, which reached 67 in 1989 (Bërxfholi 2000). Sjöberg (1992b) argues that although the authorities were successful to a certain extent, internal migration outside the prescribed parameters, that is to say, people settling

¹⁶ *Pasaportizim* derives its name from the use of domestic passport/ identity cards or *letërnjoftim* as the main pillar in the process of internal movement. All citizens were required to have these passports with them at all times. For more details see Sjöberg (1994).

without official authorisation or registration, whether in the cities or villages, did



Figure 2 Albania: key to districts

take place. This was apparent in the resulting distinct shortages of male labour in some northern areas and the skewed gendering of the labour force in southern co-operatives, where it was not uncommon to find a majority of female workers (1992a: 62). Arguably, the growth of peri-urban areas around Tirana resulted from a fair amount of such ‘unofficial’ migration. It must be re-emphasised at this point

that these measures were particularly aimed at curbing rural-urban migration. Rural-rural migration continued without regulation except for those rural areas within a radius of 10 km of the major towns, border villages, and rural areas categorised as state farms.

Besides timing, the direction of internal movements during this period is important as well. What has been discussed above has dealt mainly with rural-urban migration. Sjöberg (1992a) maintains that southern districts continued to retain their importance as sending areas for this type of migration even after 1960. This is not only true for inter-regional migration, which was directed primarily at towns in the coastal plain, but also for intra-regional migration. Cities such as Korçë, Përmet etc., also Mat and Shkodër to the north, were themselves destination places for rural migrants from their own region. In his study of internal migration in Albania during 1965-71, Borchert (1975) showed that the flight from the land in some southern districts reached extremely high values. However, this was primarily an intra-regional movement; that is to say, the cities of the same districts were absorbing these in-migrants themselves. Although the northern peripheral districts were areas of expulsion as well, the shortage of arable land per person was greater in the mountains of the south, for reasons of widespread deforestation and soil erosion. Furthermore, few new towns were built in the south to provide non-agricultural activities. A considerable number of these towns were founded in the northern districts, primarily related to mineral extraction and energy resources. During the years 1945-89, there were 43 new towns situated around the country, half of which were related to metal extraction and energy resources; whereas the other half were associated with agriculture, industry, education and administration (Rugg 1994: 63; Bërxfholi 2000). These towns absorbed a large proportion of rural-urban migration until 1989; but then became important expulsion areas after 1990, when the industries they survived on, closed down.

By discussing rural-urban migration at such length it is not implied that rural-rural or indeed urban-rural migrations were not important during the communist era. Indeed, as Sjöberg (1992b) argues, rural-rural migration in Albania during the same period was just as important as rural-urban migration; for certain periods of time, it was even more significant. Civici and Lerin (2001) point to the period between 1979 and 1989, during which rural-rural migration made up more than 60 percent of the total internal movement. This is confirmed by figures presented by Bërxfholi (2005b: 170), based on the population registers for these years: almost 98,000 people moved between 1960-1970; about 78,000 moved between 1970-1980 and another 77,000 between 1980-1990. Of these, two-thirds moved to rural areas and originated presumably primarily from rural areas. The principle direction for such rural-rural movements was from the mountains to the lowlands (Bërxfholi *et al.* 2005). This movement was facilitated on the one hand by the lack of (strong) regulations for rural-rural migration, and at the same time influenced by the strong regulations for rural-urban migration. Since the desire to leave rural life was very strong, and it was easier to leave a village than settle in a town, migration was diverted towards rural areas adjoining 'forbidden' urban centres. Sjöberg (1992b) comes to a similar conclusion as Borchert (1975), namely that the most significant population shifts took place from northern and southern rural areas to the rural areas adjoining the main cities in the coastal plain, mainly in the Tirana-Durrës-Elbasan triangle. By 1971 the highest rural population density

was reached in the districts of Durrës, Lushnjë and Fier, which form a belt of prime farming land along the coast. The second highest was in the belt of districts adjoining it to the east: Lezhë, Krujë, Tirana, Elbasan and Berat (Borchert 1975).

Tirana is an interesting case – the most desirable destination for a considerable number of (young) Albanians, yet out of reach for most of them. As a major industrial, administrative, educational and cultural centre, its periphery attracted what Sjöberg (1992b) 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. These ‘*diverted in-migrants*’ in turn contributed to the formation of densely populated ‘*extra-urban settlements*’ (Sjöberg 1992b: 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 was not without historical precedent, and was something that should have been expected. Some degree of commuting took place also to other urban areas. Hall (1994: 68) suggests that by the end of the 1980s there were around 120,000 rural-urban commuters, representing more than 6 percent of the rural population at the time. However, the ban on private ownership of cars and the rudimentary state of the public transport system and infrastructure at the time has led authors such as Borchert (1975) to cast doubt on the significance of commuting.

Although to a lesser extent, urban-rural migration did take place in Albania during these four decades. The most important time to mention in this context is the Cultural Revolution starting in 1976, during which many cadres, artists and members of the urban intelligentsia were compelled to relocate to rural areas. Throughout these decades there was also much urban-rural commuting. Such commuters were generally urban dwellers who worked in state farms, for instance in the vicinity of major towns such as Tirana, Vlorë etc. (Sjöberg 1992a: 127). There were also medical specialists (in most rural areas the GP was an urban dweller, whereas the nurse was often rural-based), teachers, agronomists etc., who commuted on a daily or weekly basis, depending on distance between home and place of work and accessibility to transport means.

It is also important to say a few words about the profiles of internal migrants. Most of those who moved, particularly from rural to urban areas, were young people between the ages of 19-30. At times, this age-group accounted for almost two-thirds of migrants (Bërxfholi *et al.* 2005: 70). Most were labour migrants and their main purpose was to escape the drudgery of village life and ensure better life prospects for the family in the towns. Semi-skilled migrants such as carpenters, masons, artisans etc. found jobs more easily in the context of urban centres and industry. However, there were also plenty of opportunities for unskilled manual labourers and farmers. These were mainly young men, although women did also participate in these industrialisation projects (Bërxfholi 2000). An interesting demographic picture emerges from the censuses of 1979 and 1989 regarding migration and gender. Whereas prior to these years the urban population contained a majority of males of working age, during these two decades an opposite trend is recorded. These censuses show that in urban areas the female-to-male ratio shifted

in favour of the first group. Bërxfholi (2000) explains this by the growing tendency of women to migrate into urban areas as a result of marriage. I would add that, considering the tightening of options for 'legal' rural-urban migration, a number of these marriages were simply a way to circumvent these harsh regulations.¹⁷ Another way of ensuring urban domicile was to attend (higher) education in major cities and remain there after the conclusion of studies. Although Sjöberg (1992a) casts doubts that such inter-regional and inter-class upward mobility was possible in Albania at this time, a good number of students managed to settle permanently in urban areas in this way. But this was not always guaranteed, as graduates would be assigned positions 'wherever the country needed them most'. In fact, under this slogan, a number of cadres at local and central level, army officers and other highly skilled specialists, were assigned employment and 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.

A final, but by no means less important, group of migrants were those who were internally exiled. These were individuals and whole families who were forcibly displaced following the defection to the 'West' 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, where deaths from hunger and overwork were not rare.¹⁸ 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 ideology behind policy-making on internal migration during this period was also reflected in the terminology that was employed in the official discourse on such matters (and to some extent still is). The term 'mechanical movement' or '*lëvizje mekanike*' was used to present this migration as the opposite of a natural process, and therefore, something that needed to be controlled. Internal migration was effectively legalised as a human right soon after the collapse of the totalitarian regime. Article 22 of the Law on Amendments to the Constitutional Provisions in 1993 enshrined the right of every Albanian citizen to choose their place of residence and move freely within the state's territory; and emigrate abroad. However, the massive spontaneous emigration and internal migration that the country would experience had already started in 1990.

So far population increases, out-migration and urbanisation during the communist era have been discussed as being totally unaffected by emigration abroad. This was indeed the case, as emigration became a capital offence in communist Albania.

3.2 *Emigration as an act of treason*

As the party tightened its hold on the country during the early years of the regime, members and adherents of the major anti-communist parties – *Partia e Legalitetit*

¹⁷ A popular rhyme in the Albanian parlance of the south at the time was: 'burrin sa një këndes/ shtëpinë sa një qymes/ vetëm në qytet të vdes.' (Small like a cockerel my husband may be / small like a hen-house my house may be / as long as I can live and die in the city).

¹⁸ For analysis and various accounts of ex-prisoners, see Logoreci (1977: 195-9)

(Legality Party) and *Balli Kombëtar* (National Front) – fled in their thousands, anticipating persecution and elimination if they stayed in the country. Several thousand supporters of these parties fled together with the withdrawing German troops, either towards Yugoslavia, or by boat towards Italy. A number of their leaders who had assisted the British ‘Special Officers’ during the war, mainly from the Legality Party, were allowed to join the latter on their journey back to the UK (Amery 1948). There, they joined King Zog, his family and some personal dependants who had settled and lived in non-political retirement (Myres *et al.* 1945: 181). Thousands of other BK and Legality supporters fled Albania in 1945-46 and settled mainly in the USA (Vickers 1995: 163). After crossing the border, they were sent to refugee camps in Greece, Yugoslavia and Italy, before being moved on to their final destinations. Conditions in the camps were very difficult and waiting to be relocated would sometimes last for several years. Often these refugees were simply assigned a destination country without being consulted beforehand. At times, they were even handed back to the Albanian authorities. By the mid-1950s and early 1960s a small anti-communist group managed to reach the United States, after having passed through Europe. Members and adherents of the BK and Legality were among those in this group, and they helped strengthen the anti-communist movement amongst Albanians in the USA (Nazi 2000: 150; Ragaru 2002). Stark (1968) reports that by 1967, Albanian refugees from camps in Italy and Yugoslavia were still arriving in the USA, and he expressed his concern that very little was known about their integration there. Probably the last of these arrivals occurred in the early 1970s, from camps in Yugoslavia, together with Albanians from Kosovo (Nazi 2000). Other Albanians reportedly reached Australia – about 400 in the early post-1944 period – also primarily anti-communist refugees (Carne 1979; ADFAT 2003). Similarly, in 1956, another convoy of around 150-200 Albanian refugees arrived in Belgium.¹⁹ These refugees had fled the country during 1945-48, when the borders with Yugoslavia closed, and had stayed for up to ten years in the refugee camp at Gerovo, Croatia (Gjeloshaj 2004). Others from this camp were taken to France. Refugees in Belgium kept arriving until 1962 also from refugee camps in Italy, where they had spent several years. By 1967 around 800 Albanian refugees lived in Belgium, including more than 300 in the commune of Schaerbeek alone (Demir 1967). These refugees from Albania were primarily from the northern highlands and mostly rural folk (Gjeloshaj 2004: 6). The majority were Catholics, but there were also Muslims among them. Most of those who fled during these years were men and very rarely were they accompanied by their families.²⁰

Most defections occurred between 1945 and the early 1950s (Sauvy 1980: 193). The border with Greece was closed in the early 1950s amidst a heightened sense of danger of a foreign invasion. This was influenced by the Greek civil war of 1945-49, during which much fighting took place very near the Greek-Albanian border and a number of Greek incursions into Albanian border villages occurred (de Rapper and Sintès 2006). As the country became isolated after subsequent breakdowns in relations first with the Yugoslavs in 1948, then with the Russians in 1961 and last with the Chinese in 1977, the militarisation of the country and of

¹⁹ Amongst these were also refugees from Kosovo.

²⁰ Although, see Prejlocaj (2005) for a personal and family account of experiences as a young woman born to refugee parents from northern Albania who settled in France.

particularly border areas further increased. From the mid-1970s, a number of parallel measures were taken to safeguard the country against foreign invasion (such as the building of the concrete bunkers) and against emigration and defection of Albanians to the 'West'. First, defection became the highest form of treason against the homeland, punishable by no less than ten years imprisonment and even death,²¹ as well as ostracising and internal exile for the family of the defector.²² Second, a barbed wire high-voltage fence, with frequent sentry-posts, ran the entire length of the land border with Greece and the former Yugoslavia.²³ Border villages were sectioned off as part of a 'border zone' and entry therein was only possible with a special permit obtained at the district police office. A penalty of up to two years imprisonment was given for those entering the zone without such a permit.²⁴ The waterways and border lakes were also tightly observed. Powerful propaganda also played a key role as migration was portrayed as a 'wound' of the past and the notion of *kurbet* was re-invoked and reloaded with negative connotations of separation, tears, suffering, loss and destruction. As a result, emigration between the 1950s and 1989 became but a trickle; only about 20,000 were able to leave the country during this entire period (de Zwager *et al.* 2005: 8).²⁵

The rupture that 45 years of communist rule brought to the emigration history and tradition of Albania was brought to an end in 1990. The migration that then took place was one of the most significant modern global migrations, both in terms of volume and typologies.²⁶

4. Post-communist emigration: 'Hello Europe! I hope to find you well'²⁷

Recent years have seen a proliferation of studies on post-communist Albanian migration, most of which focus on international migration. This section presents a

²¹ Article 47, gj). of the Penal Code of the Socialist People's Republic of Albania, 1977, Law nr. 5591 (Kuvendi Popullor i RPSSH 15.6.1977). This article dealt with matters of high treason against homeland, and point gj). dealt with defection in particular. This was to confirm that which was stipulated by the Constitution of the Socialist People's Republic of Albania of 1976.

²² Article 2 of Decree 5912 (Kuvendi Popullor i RPSSH 26.6.1979).

²³ The space between the fence and the actual border line, one km in width, was the 'forbidden zone' where anyone would be shot without warning. Public displays of these dead bodies around the border villages were used as deterrents. At four meters on each side of the fence and half a meter deep the ground was flattened and kept soft each day, sometimes by even supplementing it with sand, in order to show the footprints of those who attempted to attack the country, but most importantly, those who attempted to defect. See also de Rapper and Sintés (2006: 17-18).

²⁴ Article 220 of the Penal Code of the Socialist People's Republic of Albania, 1977, Law nr. 5591 (Kuvendi Popullor i RPSSH 15.6.1977). It covers administrative matters related to these border areas.

²⁵ Logoreci (1977: 193) believed that the numbers of those who managed to escape ran into several thousands.

²⁶ Article 38 of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, 1998, states: '1. Everyone has the right to choose their place of residence and to move freely within the territory of the country [Albania]. '2. No one can be hindered from freely leaving the country'. The constitution was approved by the Albanian Parliament on 21 October 1998, and accepted by referendum by the Albanian people on 22 November 1998 (Kuvendi i RSH 2003; ACIL 2005: 249).

²⁷ From the speech of Dr Sali Berisha during the rally of the Democratic Party on the day of their election victory, March 1992.

review and analysis of this emigration. It opens with a chronology, followed by an enumeration. It then continues with an overview of the shifting nature of migration during the last decade or so in terms of typologies. The conclusion provides a discussion of the patterns of (non-)integration of Albanian migrants in the main host countries to which they have migrated since 1990.

4.1 Chronology of Albanian migration

In defining a chronology of contemporary Albanian migration it is important to emphasise that ‘push-factors’ were behind most of the 1990s migrations. The following chronology draws heavily on King (2003), King and Vullnetari (2003) and Barjaba and King (2005); however, new nuances have been added to this existing work. Contemporary Albanian migration unfolded in several episodes.

1990: the ‘embassy migrants’ and others

As mentioned earlier, defections to the West did take place during the communist regime, but they were few and were given little if no publicity. However, towards the late 1980s some high-profile defections received extensive publicity, because of their nature. One of these was the case of the Popa family, who entered the Italian embassy in 1985.²⁸ It was only in May 1990 that the Albanian authorities gave permission for them to be flown to Italy. By June of that year, the issuing of passports was liberalised²⁹ and only a few days later the first ‘act of exodus’ took place with the ‘embassy occupation’. The ‘embassy migrants’ are widely accepted as the first sign of the mass Albanian emigration which was to follow. During June–July 1990 around 5,000 Albanians sought refuge in Western embassies in Tirana. The security forces resisted and there were serious clashes on 2 July 1990.³⁰ Eventually they were allowed to leave for the West, primarily to Germany, Italy, France and other European countries. As they settled in different places in these countries, they became the initial base for the chain migration that would follow in the years to come.

There has been considerable debate over the issue of the significance of the ‘embassy migration’. It is argued that this event, and those that soon followed, were spontaneous challenges against the denial of one of the most fundamental personal freedoms – the right to hold passports and travel abroad (Barjaba and King 2005: 4). Others claim that those who entered the embassies were just hungry

²⁸ Four sisters and two brothers of the Popa family from Durrës dressed themselves to look like foreigners and speaking to the Albanian guard at the embassy compound in Italian, they posed as Italian tourists. Once inside the Italian embassy grounds, they claimed asylum and threatened to poison themselves if they were handed over to the *Sigurimi* (the feared Albanian security police). The Italians accommodated them inside the embassy, but this brought serious friction between them and the Albanian authorities of the time. The embassy was besieged by Albanian armed special forces for several weeks. The Popa family lived in the embassy compound for over four years, until they were finally granted permission to leave the country (Qesari 2000: 160).

²⁹ The Decree no. 7393 on the Issuance of Passports, dated 12 June 1990, is considered as the first act of the Albanian authorities to ease restrictions on emigration after 45 years (Kuvendi Popullor i RPSSH 12.6.1990; ACPS 2002: 16).

³⁰ 2 July was subsequently assigned as the ‘Migrants’ day’ by the Albanian government, in commemoration of these events (Kuvendi i RSH 18.12.2006: Article 36).

and impoverished people, who simply wanted to go and work in the West where the wages were better, and that there was no conscious political motivation behind these acts as such. In an interview for a national newspaper in Albania, one of the organisers of the first action that took the Italian embassy by storm argued that this was a conscious act of defiance against the state.³¹ In fact, both motivations might have been the case. So far, there has been no systematic research on the experiences of these ‘embassy migrants’, which would reveal fascinating insights into a world that was crumbling, and another one that was being born.

Whatever the motives of those who entered the embassies, the impact was considerable. In the following weeks, thousands from all over the country flocked towards Tirana in the hope of entering one of the embassies. Others targeted the ships in the port of Durrës, intending to sail them to Italy, but were prevented by the security forces (Vickers and Pettifer 1997: 27). A handful was able to reach Italy by small rafts (Barjaba *et al.* 1992: 529). A small-scale exodus continued to Italy until early 1991. Further north, a group of 70 Albanians mounted makeshift rafts and on 6 January 1991 managed to cross the Buna river and reach the town of Ulqin (Ulcinj) in southern Montenegro (Barjaba and King 2005: 4). Meanwhile, more significant events were taking place on the southern frontier, as thousands trekked from all over the country towards and over the icy and snowy mountains to reach Greece. Particularly towards December of 1990, the scale of this migration was gaining dramatic proportions. More than 800 Albanian citizens (including many ethnic Greeks) are recorded as having entered Greece in the single night of 30-31 December 1990 alone (Konidaris 2005: 70). However, the numbers of those crossing to Greece are unknown, as it was impossible to keep records, and there was much to-and-fro movement. Altogether, from the ‘embassy invasion’ until early 1991, perhaps some 20,000 Albanians left, but this estimate can only be approximate.

1991: the boat exodus to Italy and the parallel mass migration to Greece

Chaos leading up to Albania’s first democratic elections led to the first ‘boat-people’ exodus to southern Italy in March 1991: 25,000 migrants were accepted by the Italian authorities and were settled in various parts of the country. The economic situation in Albania deteriorated further as strikes paralysed the country, which was nearing total collapse. Barely a few months later, in August of the same year, people from across Albania gathered in the main ports of Durrës and Vlorë and seized all kinds of boats, commandeering them towards the Italian coast. But most of the 20,000 who were part of this second boat exodus were repatriated soon after their arrival in Italy. 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 had taken place and therefore could not be given refugee status. Clandestine migration continued to Italy nonetheless. Meanwhile, a larger but less well-documented exodus was taking place to Greece, particularly from the ethnic Greek border areas of Gjirokastër and Sarandë, which by mid-1991 had suffered severe depopulation.³² An indication of the proportions

³¹ Interview with Mr Luan Laze (‘Koha Jonë’ 19 June 2005).

³² The author of this report was studying in Gjirokastër at the time and has personal experience of these events. A number of her male classmates left for Greece in the autumn/winter of 1990. They

of such large-scale migration can be found in the numbers of those forcibly repatriated by the Greek authorities during their *skoupa*, or ‘sweep-up’ operations of irregular migrants. An estimated 100,000 Albanians were repatriated in the first *skoupa* in December 1991 (Barjaba and King 2005: 10). Altogether, between 1991-92, an estimated 300,000 Albanians left the country (Carletto *et al.* 2006: 770).

1993-96: migration stabilises as the economy grows

This is considered as a period of growth and stability for Albania, although not altogether due to the ruthless neo-liberal reforms of the Berisha government, known as ‘shock-therapy’. It is argued that it was the remittances from emigrants which in fact played *the* key role in Albania’s economic recovery during these years (Korovilas 1999). By the mid-1990s, these are estimated to have been at least US\$700 million dollars per year, or a quarter of the country’s GDP (Korovilas 1999: 399). Emigration continued as the country’s unemployment was very high, due to the closure of factories and plants. At the same time, new forms of social and economic marginalisation were emerging, and emigration was considered as the only solution to this situation. Furthermore, as the new democratic government took power, the tables were turned and the state administration was cleansed of all employees who had even the slightest ‘communist’ background and replenished with party-loyalists. *Biografi*, i.e. family background, was again the preferred tool for nation-building and power consolidation (de Rapper 2006). In the euphoria of the anti-communist ethos of these years, many sought to escape potential persecution and humiliation by resorting to emigration. By the mid-1990s, the estimated figure of emigrants abroad was around 400,000, of whom almost 90 percent were in Greece.

1997: mass emigration following the ‘pyramid crisis’

As emigrants sent or brought home their remittances, most of these were used for their families’ immediate needs. However, a portion was invested in private ‘saving’ schemes, which flourished particularly during 1995-96. At this time the official banking sector in Albania was poorly developed; so were the rules and regulations that governed it. An illegal exchange currency market was flourishing since 1990. Businesses and individuals turned thus to private firms for credit and later on for investment. The number of schemes went up as did the interest rates they offered, in an upward race to attract investors. By the end of 1996, the interest reached almost 50 percent a month, which of course could not be sustained (Jarvis 2000). At their height in 1996, these pyramids had attracted deposits equivalent to half of the country’s GDP for that year (Korovilas 1999: 409). People sold houses, livestock and other assets they had in a rush to become rich quickly, but international remittances counted for a considerable, if not the major, share of ‘investment’. The pyramids’ collapse in early 1997 led to a period of political and

would send back notes saying how great it all was over there (Greece). A few months later she went to live with friends in Dropull, the area of Gjirokastrë district populated by ethnic Greeks. Already by 1991, only older people and some women and children were left behind in most villages of Dropull. During this time, she herself saw the mass exodus of the first half of 1991, as hundreds of men would walk for days, camp near Kakavija and then cross over to Greece in groups.

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 these resulted in the tragic death of dozens of emigrants.³³ As before, there were larger but unquantifiable crossings of the Greek border. In 1998 the long-awaited regularisation of 'irregular' immigrants in Greece took place: two-thirds of those regularised were Albanians. Albanians were also prominent in the regularisations in Italy in 1995 and 1998. In the meantime, Albanian communities already established by onward migration in other EU countries, such as France, Germany and Belgium, were augmented by new arrivals. The evolving diasporic network spread to the UK. Further away, a new Albanian community was developing alongside the historical diaspora settled in the USA, as individuals and families emigrated there through the Green Card Lottery Programme run by the USA government.

1999: emigration following the Kosovo crisis

The Albanian economy recovered rapidly after the fall of the pyramid schemes, principally due to more remittances sent by more emigrants. However, in 1999, around 500,000 ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo entered the country, fleeing the ethnic cleansing of Milosevic's regime. Most of the refugees were sheltered by Albanian families, while accommodation for others was provided in emergency camps. The Kosovan refugee crisis destabilised the already fragile economic and demographic situation, especially in northern Albania. As Kosovans moved onwards to European asylum destinations, many (northern) Albanians mixed themselves in with them. Thus, Albanians spread themselves once more beyond Greece and Italy to other EU and even North American destinations. Migrant networks and numbers developed and consolidated in France, Germany, Belgium, the UK, the USA, Canada and even in Australia.

2000-07: relative stability and consolidation of emigrant communities abroad

During these years, the Albanian economic and political situation gains more stability as the recurrent crisis and emergency situations of the 1990s seem to have come to an end by 2000. This year also marks the end of large-scale mass emigrations, although Carletto *et al.* (2006: 782) argue that emigration levels remained rather high during 2001-02. However, not much data have come forth to suggest any particular evolution from the early 2000s on. Although this period is regarded as relatively stable, there has been further social, demographic and economic polarisation of the country, not only in terms of individuals and households, but also regionally. For instance, the highest incidence of poverty is recorded in the mountainous north-east and central regions of the country, where districts such as Kukës, Tropojë and Pukë in the north, and Gramsh in central

³³ Such were the events that took place 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. Many more have drowned crossing the Otranto Strait, also known in Albanian parlance as the Death Strait or the Channel of Tears. By 1999 one estimate was a total of 340 persons (UNDP-Albania 2000: 37).

Albania, continue to fare the worst (De Soto *et al.* 2002; Lundström and Ronnås 2006). On the other hand, although the Tirana region is one of the most prosperous country-wide, extreme levels of poverty and wealth are recorded within the district and even inside the city itself (De Soto *et al.* 2002). Albanian politics continue to be dominated by cliques, corruption, mismanagement of public funds and poor planning of the economy in general. Combined with continuous power shortages that have recently often reached 15 hours out of 20 for rural areas, and at times total blackouts, the country's economic and social prospects are not very bright. On the other hand, the Albanian governments have taken several measures to meet the requirements for *rapprochement* with the EU. A strong element in these requirements are Readmission Agreements (RA) with destination countries and most recently with the EU *en bloc*, measures to 'combat illegal migration and trafficking' etc. (IOM 2006a; 2006b). These latter, combined with the continuing lack of socio-economic prospects in the country, and the stricter EU and other developed countries' visa regimes in place, continue to mitigate against the poor accessing much-needed migration opportunities, as these are increasingly becoming more expensive.

During these years, further regularisation programmes took place in Greece and Italy, as well as an amnesty for asylum-seekers in the UK. Several migrants were able to benefit from these measures and consolidate their stay in these host countries, although the situation in Greece remains precarious, because of the highly bureaucratic system in place there. Under these circumstances, the typology of Albanian emigration has undergone profound changes. This relates to the profiles of people emigrating, destinations, and ways of migrating. These will be elaborated in more detail in the following sections.

4.2 Figures

Until 2000, figures of Albanian emigrants abroad were patchy, although it was generally accepted that they were proportionally the highest amongst post-communist European countries. The data that exists comes from two sources: Albania, and the destination countries, primarily Greece and Italy.

Albanian sources

In 2000 the Albanian Department of Emigration within the Albanian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs estimated that, by 1999, there were 800,000 Albanians living abroad (Barjaba 2000). The majority of them, 500,000, were in Greece, 200,000 were in Italy, and the remaining 100,000 in other European countries and in North America (Table 2). These 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. Some of the figures presented were 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. Although it is not clear how these estimates were calculated, they are the most cited that apply to this period (1990-99), and they have remained largely unchallenged.

A second and – in a sense – more reliable source of data on emigration was provided by the results of the 2001 Albanian Census (INSTAT 2002). The Census revealed an estimated net loss due to emigration of more than 600,000 between 1989-2001, calculated by the census residual method (calculating net emigration as the residual of inter-censal population change, minus the net difference between births and deaths). This figure, however, excluded short-term migration of less than one year's duration, and thus, much emigration to Greece, which is temporary. So, the two figures are in fact quite compatible.

More recently, the Government of Albania has published revised estimates, which put the number of Albanians abroad at over one million by 2005 (Government of Albania 2005: 36). This is the second column of figures in Table 2. Although, again, it is not clear what were the sources or the methods used to arrive at these estimates, there is reason to believe that the figures for the main countries such as Greece and Italy are very probable. We shall come back to this later, when the figures provided from these host-country authorities will be discussed.

Table 2. Estimates of Albanians living abroad, 1999 and 2005

| Country | 1999 | 2005 |
|--------------|----------------|------------------|
| Greece | 500,000 | 600,000 |
| Italy | 200,000 | 250,000 |
| USA | 12,000 | 150,000 |
| UK | 5,000 | 50,000 |
| Germany | 12,000 | 15,000 |
| Canada | 5,000 | 11,500 |
| Belgium | 2,500 | 5,000 |
| Turkey | 1,000 | 5,000 |
| France | 2,000 | 2,000 |
| Austria | 2,000 | 2,000 |
| Switzerland | 1,000 | 1,500 |
| Netherlands | ? | 1,000 |
| TOTAL | 742,500 | 1,093,000 |

Source: Barjaba (2000) and Government of Albania (2005).

The data in Table 2 show a clear increase of 350,000 in the number of Albanians living abroad between 1999-2005. It might be the case that they emigrated during these years, but not necessarily. Not knowing how these figures have been calculated makes it difficult to draw such conclusions. One thing is for certain: they and the document they appeared in – the National Strategy on Migration – indicate an increased awareness on the side of the Government of Albania about the issue of emigration. Besides an increase in numbers, these figures also indicate a shift in the relative importance of various destination countries. Although Greece and Italy remain the main receiving countries, other destinations such as the USA, the UK and Canada have become attractive to an increasing number of Albanian emigrants. Before turning to the issue of changing trends and patterns of emigration, the figures on Albanian emigrants provided in the four main host countries are discussed briefly.

Greece

Data on the numbers of Albanians living in Greece during most of the 1990s were patchy and based on estimates. The only official sources were the data provided for the forced repatriations during the *skoupa* operations mentioned earlier, which in the early 1990s were on average 230,000 expulsions per year (Fakiolas 2003). Although these included multiple counting of the same individuals who would cross over to Greece as soon as they were deported, it still indicates that emigration to Greece was large-scale.³⁴ The reasons behind this lack of data were primarily related to the irregular character of most emigration from Albania to Greece on the one hand, and the unpreparedness of the Greek authorities to deal with immigrants on the other (Hatziprokopiou 2006). Data collection services have not been coordinating their activities, which has hampered the creation of a clear idea on the numbers of immigrants there. Furthermore, some government departments still refuse to share certain data, such as those on ethnic Greeks in Greece, on grounds of ‘national security’.³⁵

Official data have been available only in recent years, based on the two regularisation programmes of 1998 and then 2001. The 1998 regularisation provided a figure of 241,561 Albanian immigrants, or 65 per cent of the total non-EU, ‘non-ethnic Greek’ registered immigrant population in Greece. However, the number of those who did not apply for regularisation was considerable, but unknown (Fakiolas 2003). Data from the second regularisation programme of 2001 have not been available by nationality of applicants. However, based on what is available and other published work on these (Fakiolas 2003; Baldwin-Edwards 2004), Barjaba and King (2005: 12) estimate that there were at least 500,000 documented and undocumented Albanian citizens living in Greece in 2001. Besides the regularisation programmes, other data come from the 2001 Greek census, which enumerated 443,550 Albanians (Baldwin-Edwards 2004), although this might be an underestimate, as censuses tend to miss some migrants. Furthermore, as Baldwin-Edwards argues, many ethnic-Greek Albanians might have been counted as Greeks by the enumerators. To conclude on this point, Barjaba and King (2005: 13) estimate that there could be around 600,000 Albanians (a combination of documented and undocumented persons) living in Greece by 2005. Considering that the total Greek population is less than 11 million, this is a considerable presence, equivalent to more than 5 per cent of the country’s population.

Italy

Italian data³⁶ on Albanian migrants derive from several sources – which, however, are far from consistent with each other. First there are the periodic regularisations, as mentioned above. Previously undocumented Albanians who took advantage of

³⁴ The author of this paper was told the story of a migrant who had travelled over the mountains to Greece almost 100 times, after being sent back to Albania only a few days after each arrival. This might be an exaggeration, but it gives an insight into the scale of the events taking place during those years.

³⁵ Baldwin-Edwards (2004) provides an in-depth discussion of various governmental departments that deal with data on immigration in Greece, as well as immigration figures and estimates for Greece.

³⁶ Thanks to Prof. Russell King for his contribution to updating these data.

these schemes were 29,724 in the 1995 regularisation, 38,996 for 1998 and 55,035 for 2002 (King 2005: 140). The regularisation data also feed into the second source, the 'permits to stay' database held by the Ministry of the Interior. This source records 240,400 Albanians with a permit to stay at the end of 2003; Albanians being one of three groups (Moroccans and Romanians are the others) that each account for around 11 percent of the immigrant total in Italy, and stand well ahead of the three next largest immigrant nationalities (Ukrainians, Chinese and Filipinos, each at around 4-5 percent). The third source is the municipal population register – the 8000 Italian municipalities which annually report demographic statistics to ISTAT, the national statistics agency. According to this source, Albanians at the end of 2004 numbered 316,700 and, at 13.2 percent of the total foreign population, were the leading immigrant nationality (followed by Moroccans, 12.3 percent, and Romanians 10.4 percent). Fourthly, there is the 2001 Italian census. This seems out of step with the other sources, even allowing for its earlier date: 173,100 Albanians were counted. Nevertheless, proportion-wise the figure is consistent with the others, as Albanians made up 13.0 percent of foreigners enumerated, just behind Moroccans at 13.2 percent (see Bonifazi 2007: 137).

Several sources of imprecision can be noted in the above sources. The Italian census, like the Greek one, probably 'missed' many Albanians (and other immigrants), who have a higher propensity than the native population to 'hide' from the census enumerators. Both the permits to stay and the population register have a tendency to fail to fully update their records, especially as regards cancellations (i.e. expired permits or migrants who have moved out of a municipality); both these sources therefore have inbuilt tendencies to over-record immigrant numbers. On the other hand, none of the above discussion acknowledges the presence of a residual of undocumented migrants. Certainly this fraction is lower than in Greece, but the precise number is of course unknown. Caponio (2005) quotes Caritas estimates which increase the permit total of 240,400 (end of 2003) to 270,000; but other, more recent, estimates project a much higher total. For instance, an estimate by the well-regarded Ismu institute (quoted in Bonifazi 2007: 130) gives a total of 458,600 Albanians for mid-2005 (13.7 percent of total immigrants, just ahead of Romanians, 13.0 percent, and Moroccans, 12.2. percent). This would indicate that the generally quoted estimate of around 250,000 for 2005 (cf. Barjaba and King 2005; Government of Albania 2005) may need to be revised substantially upwards.

UK

The presence of Albanians in the UK is estimated at 50,000 by 2005 (Government of Albania 2005) but some British officials have even hinted at 100,000. There is however no systematic research into this issue; and, moreover, there is no information about the method of calculation or the sources of data. Furthermore, it is safe to presume that this figure refers most probably to the entire Albanian community in the UK, which would include Albanians from Kosovo and Macedonia. Things get even more complex when considering that a number of Albanians in the UK have registered under a Kosovan identity. Thus, official

Home Office data for instance would have to be interpreted cautiously.³⁷ However, the recent direct flight service of British Airways between London and Tirana indicates that numbers must be considerable to make such a project commercially viable; most of the passengers on this route are Albanian migrants.

USA

Providing numbers of Albanian immigrants in the USA has also been problematic. The picture is further rendered more complex here by the existence of a well-established historical Albanian diaspora, as noted earlier.³⁸ The figures for the Albanians in the USA come from three sources. First, Albanian community organisations claim that by 1989 an estimated 250,000 Albanians originating from Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia were living in the USA; by 2000 these estimates had reached half a million, including second and third generations (Nazi 2000: 149; Trix 2001: 12). On the other hand, the Government of Albania estimates that around 150,000 were living in the USA by 2005 (Table 2), although no elaboration is given on the methodology or time-period this figure corresponds to. The Government of Albania figure is much closer to the data provided by the USA immigration authorities, which, based on the 2000 census, report a total of only 113,661 Americans of Albanian ancestry (Orgocka 2005: 140).³⁹ According to Orgocka, the most important route of emigration to the USA has been through the annual Diversity Visa programme, which accounts for more than three-quarters (76 percent) of Albanian immigrants as of 2000. Only in the last decade (1996-2006), slightly more than 50,000 Albanian citizens have obtained permanent residence in the USA (author's calculation of data by country of birth from US Department of Homeland Security 2006; 2007). According to these data, the annual figure of naturalisations has also increased during this period from about 350 in 1996 to almost 4,000 in 2006. Of course the number of students, temporary visa holders, irregular migrants and other categories would push the total figure to much higher levels.

4.3 Characterisation of Albanian emigration

As stressed earlier, post-communist Albanian emigration is a phenomenon with a strong historical background. But, Albanian contemporary migration is taking place under very different circumstances than the early migrations. In particular, its massive concentration over a short period of time as the country moved almost overnight from total closure to large-scale out-migration, marks Albanian migration as a significant and unique case. Van Hear (1998: 119) has described it as 'a new migration order', King (2005: 133) considers Albania as a 'laboratory for the study of migration and development', whilst Carletto *et al.* (2006) talk about a 'country on the move'. Taking into account these circumstances and special

³⁷ See also Dalipaj (2005) for a detailed and sensitive analysis of Albanians' 'hidden identities' in the UK.

³⁸ See section 2.3 of this paper.

³⁹ However, see Federal Writers' Project (1939), Roucek (1939a), Nagi (1988), Tirta (1999) and Trix (2001) for problems with the recording of pre-1990 Albanian immigrants.

features, Barjaba and King (2005) argue that post-1990 Albanian emigration is a 'new' type of international migration. These features will now be discussed, starting with Barjaba's (2000) first model of the Albanian migration and continuing with the development of this model by Barjaba and King (2005) and King (2005).

Based on research and studies carried out throughout the first post-communist decade, Barjaba first suggested an 'Albanian model' of emigration in 2000. This model has the following features: it is *intense* (a rate of emigration much higher than any other Eastern bloc country); it is largely *economically driven* – a form of '*survival migration*'; it has a *high degree of irregularity*, with many undocumented migrants; it displays lots of *to-and-fro movement*, especially with Greece; and it is *dynamic and rapidly evolving*, especially as regards new destinations and routes of migration. Let us critically evaluate each of these defining features, starting with the last one.

That Albanian contemporary migration is *dynamic and rapidly evolving* is more than justified in the light of recent data and other information. Indeed, discussion of the following other features clearly shows this pattern over the last 17 years.

First, its *intensity*. Particularly in the early 1990s, but also immediately after the chaos of 1997, Albanian emigration was indeed very *intense*. Tens of thousands of emigrants left within a matter of months rather than years and by the mid-1990s, approximately 20 percent of the working population had emigrated (King 2003). Particularly in the first three years (1991-93), Albania's average annual emigration rate per capita was six times higher than that of other Balkan countries, and four to five times higher than that of other former communist countries in Europe (Misja 1998; Barjaba 2000). These rates of emigration continued to be high until the end of the decade (Barjaba and King 2005: 19). However, when referring to the increased numbers of registered migrants in Greece and Italy one cannot altogether confirm a further increase in overall emigration. Figures of (applications for) regularisation may reflect immigrants who have already been residing in the host country, without necessarily having arrived there in recent years. It is also the case that controls over the 'migrant smuggling' trade across the Adriatic, particularly between Vlorë and Otranto, but also between Albania and Greece, have become much more effective in recent years (Chaloff 2005). Furthermore, some return has taken place, although numbers are largely unknown. The revised figures of the Government of Albania for 2005 suggest that this intensity has continued in recent years, although there are no other reliable sources to confirm this trend, beyond some Italian data reviewed above. Some of the most significant increases are registered for USA, Canada and the UK. Further research on migration to these destinations would reveal much more about the trend in recent years and confirm (or not) the continuing high emigration rate. The initiative of the Government of Albania to create a database of emigrants might also shed some light on the issue, although it might be a little too late for those who have already settled abroad.⁴⁰ Furthermore, this would not be able to capture irregular migrants.

This brings us to the next feature of the model: the *ratio of irregular to regular migration*. This ratio was abnormally high in the early 1990s, higher than for any other immigrant group in the host countries (Barjaba and King 2005). In 1997, Greece counted 40 irregular Albanian migrants for every one regularised, whereas

⁴⁰ See for details on this database the law Kuvendi i RSH (18.12.2006).

in Italy this ratio was two irregular Albanian migrants for every one regularised. After the Presidential Decree of November 1997 in Greece and the Turco-Napolitano decree in Italy (1998), and subject to regularisation of all those who have applied, these ratios became approximately 1:1 in Greece and 1:4 in Italy by the end of 1990s (Barjaba 2000: 61; 2003: 160-6). However, one must bear in mind that migrants in Greece are likely to fall into an irregular situation within a very short time, mostly due to the short-term validity of most permits, the bureaucratic obstacles and 'the discretionality and corruption involved' during the process of acquiring the documents (Barjaba and King 2005: 13). As the experience of Greece's second regularisation shows, the process is often endlessly delayed and it can last six months or even longer (Fakiolas 2003).

Within the context of the Albanian migration gradually becoming more regular, it is important to mention that in recent years, legal channels of emigration have become more accessible, as information about them has accumulated and spread widely. Two of the most successful programmes have been the Diversity Visa programme for the USA and the Skilled Worker Visa programme for Canada. The first one requires a level of 12 years of schooling or equivalent of work experience, which makes it accessible to a wide range of people. The second one, however, is accessible to a smaller section of the society, those who have tertiary education. Emigration of the 'elite' – students, academics, scientists and intellectuals – has in fact seen an increase in recent years, raising concerns of a tide of brain drain. According to a study by the Centre for Economic and Social Studies in Albania, 50 percent of Albania's lecturers, researchers and academics had emigrated between 1990-2005 (Gëdeshi and Black 2006). Even more alarming was the finding that more than 70 percent of them had emigrated together with their families, which means that the chances for an eventual return are very small indeed. The trend seems to be on the increase, as an estimated 2000-4000 university students leave Albania each year to study abroad in Italy, Greece, France, Germany, the USA, the UK, etc. (Gëdeshi and Black 2006: 8). Whilst the handful of studies on Albanian highly educated migrants present interesting data, further research is needed on this topic in order to understand more qualitative features of the trends; the composition of flows in terms of age, gender, social class and rural versus urban background; motivations; experiences; migratory and education trajectories etc. In addition to obvious benefits for the research community, such studies would be essential in informing government policies on development and brain migration.

The high ratio of irregular to regular migration in the 1990s was accompanied by lots of *to-and-fro movements*, another characteristic of the Albanian migration model discussed by Barjaba. This was particularly the case for emigration to Greece, in spite of (but also because of) the large-scale repatriation operations by the Greek authorities during these years. This to-and-fro mobility was facilitated by geographical proximity, particularly for communities living in the Albanian border areas. In recent years, due to the regularisation programmes, but also the application of very stringent (and inhumane) procedures on both sides of the border, these to-and-fro movements have decreased. However, temporary migration is one of the most important forms of migration to Greece, particularly for those who cannot access or afford to gain other types of work or stay permits there. This temporary migration is designed around the needs of the Greek

economy, which has seen the majority of these types of migrants working in agriculture. Most of these migrants themselves are from rural areas. Similar developments have been observed in the case of to-and-fro migration to Italy, widespread during the 1990s, but less important in recent years. The reasons for this decrease are similar to the Greek case, but in the Italian case the patrolling of Albanian waters by Italian coastguards has had a dampening impact on the to-and-fro movements. These operations by the host countries were combined with drastic measures from the Albanian authorities, which at the extreme saw the placement of a ban for three years on boats owned by Albanians.

One of the most important features of the model is that emigration is largely used as a *survival strategy*. At the beginning of the 1990s, Albania emerged as the poorest country in Europe, with one third of its population under 15 years old, and very few job opportunities and future prospects. The economy had been stagnant during much of the 1980s with chronic food shortages and rising (yet hidden) underemployment (Sandstrom and Sjöberg 1991; Bërxfholi *et al.* 2005). By 1990 starvation threatened as strikes brought the already collapsing economy to a standstill. The privatisation of farmland and livestock was accompanied by closure of most industries, as ultra-liberal reforms took place in the early 1990s. By 1993 inflation rose to triple digits and unemployment was widespread well into the mid-1990s (Jarvis 2000: 5). Under these circumstances, mass emigration became the only means of survival for many households (King 2003). This continued to be the case for most of the 1990s, and especially again after the collapse of the pyramid schemes in 1997. As tens of thousands of Albanians lost most and in some cases all their savings, even their house and other property, they turned to migration yet again as a way to survive. King (2005: 141) argues that migration continues to be considered by Albanians as the ‘most effective way of coping with the country’s disastrous economic conditions’.

As Barjaba (2000) and Barjaba and King (2005) have shown, describing Albanian emigrants as simply economic migrants does not capture the essence of Albanian migration and what was happening in Albania during those years. Economic motivations were inextricably linked to the turmoil of the political situation in the country, which adds to this migration certain features of a refugee displacement phenomenon. Barjaba and King (2005: 9) thus argue that the term *economic refugees* is more fitting to the Albanian situation of the 1990s, particularly in 1990-2, but also in 1997.⁴¹

It could be further argued that this term has relevance for emigrants beyond these years of mass emigration from Albania, since a number of emigrants continue to leave the country following *political harassment*. It has become common in Albanian politics that a parliamentary or local election victory of a party is accompanied by a cleansing from the administration posts of as many former employees as possible, and their replacement with party loyalists. This relates to administrative and bureaucratic positions, including those in the police force, medical and education staff, (especially) customs, etc., and ranges from the highly specialised economist in the Central Customs Offices to the school cleaner in the village. A number of those who are fired seek their fortunes abroad, as supporters

⁴¹ This has wider implications for theoretical conceptualisations of refugees and economic migrants, a division which is often blurred and artificial, as many situations in countries around the world have shown.

of the party in charge of the government return from emigration to take up the vacant positions.

Another motivation for emigration, as posited by King (2005: 141), is that of '*personal liberation and self-expression*'. The nature of nation-building in communist Albania had created a sense of community where the individual voice was silenced (Lubonja 2001). This was particularly pronounced in the aspirations of young people, who most of all felt the burden of the denial of leisure and pleasure. As Mai (2002) clearly shows, many of these youth 'found themselves' through emigration. This motivation was particularly relevant to two sub-groups, who were most marginalised in patriarchal and communist Albania: women and gay people. King (2005) further argues that their emigration was an expression of '*political resistance*' against the authoritarian culture of surveillance and control, supported by the totalitarian regime. Indeed, as was suggested earlier, some of the first embassy migrants were motivated by such political resistance against all the apparatus that was set up to deny them their basic human rights and freedoms. This has emerged as a strong motive particularly for migrants who were politically persecuted during the communist regime. For some of them, the experiences of terror and persecution were strong motivators of emigration and the decision of non-return.

However, in the chaos and turmoil of the first years of post-communism, as some human rights and freedoms were gained, others were denied, in the new context that shaped Albania's society and norms. A re-emergence of the *blood feuds* in the North served as a catalyst for many men to flee the country and seek safety abroad (King 2005), whilst some other men restructured patriarchal norms by forcing women to engage in prostitution (Mai 2001).

4.4 *Continuing evolution and diversification*

In recent years Albanian migration has evolved to something more diverse than just the typologies mentioned above. Whereas access to migration (to Greece) in the 1990s was possible for a wider and poorer mass of people, this is not the case anymore, due to the increased cost of such emigration.

Most of the 1990s' emigration was dominated by male migrants, which was particularly reflected in their general absence from Albanian households, especially in rural areas. Between 1989 and 2001, numbers of these rural males fell by 20 percent. However, participation of Albanian women in migration has increased in recent years, largely as a result of family reunification. This is an important change even though there is still no equal gender balance as such. In the early 1990s there were very few females in Greece; in the regularisation of 1998 they accounted for 18 percent of Albanians who applied. However, in the 2001 census the figure was 41 percent (Fakiolas and Maratou-Alipranti 2000: 111; Baldwin-Edwards 2004: 5). King and Barjaba (2005), however, do not consider this as a dramatic rise in the ratio of females, rather as a better counting of those already in Greece, as they may be under-represented in the regularisation applications. A similar pattern is evident in Italy: in the early 1990s females accounted for only 14 percent of Albanians; ten years later this rate was 40 percent (Bonifazi and Sabatino 2003; King 2005). The majority of females have migrated as part of a family, either together with the family unit (especially migration to the USA through the Diversity Visa

programme), or following their husband/fiancé after he has established himself in a host country such as Greece or Italy. 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 professional and highly skilled women, mostly from well-to-do families. Some insights into the typologies and patterns of such migration are shed by Orgocka (2005) in her study on the emigration of professional Albanian women to the USA. However, this area of research needs further attention.

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 sex-work migration present a complex continuum of age, education, social class, geographical background, consent for migration and participation in sex work etc. (Davies 2007). While exploitation needs to be addressed at every point, be it in working conditions, migration or home environments, a similar concern needs to address the migratory agendas of these individuals as well.

As well as individual migration trajectories to a particular country, it is also quite common for Albanian migrants to continue onward migration from their first host country to another. This has produced a hierarchy of preferred destinations, with Greece at the bottom as the least preferred (but most common and most accessible) destination and the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia topping the list. Most onward migration has involved trajectories from Greece to Italy; onward to France, Belgium, and the UK; Greece to the USA; Greece to Australia etc. Besides this pattern as sequenced here, it is also common for members of the same family to be distributed as emigrants in several countries. This is a feature which is rather unique to the Albanian experience of migration, and reflects Albanians' response to changing 'opportunity geographies' in different countries at different points in time, set within an overarching hostile international environment to freedom of migration. The creation of transnational and even embryonic diasporic communities has thus become reality for Albanian migrants as well (Mai 2005).

4.5 Migration of minority groups in Albania

The limited research that exists on the migration patterns and experiences of minorities in and from Albania has particularly focussed on those of the ethnic Greek and the Vlach communities, primarily their migration to Greece.

Ethnic-Greeks⁴² were amongst the very first to emigrate to Greece after 1990, as mentioned earlier, and have continued to emigrate in large numbers. Their Greek ancestry, knowledge of the language and previous kinship connections in Greece, gave them a head start above ethnic Albanians in this emigration. Although they have suffered discrimination as the last tier in the 'hierarchy of Greekness' (Triandafyllidou and Veikou 2002), their entry and stay in Greece have been facilitated administratively. This situation impacts on migrants, as well as on returnees whose success in running a business in transnational border areas depends on business connections on both sides of the border (de Rapper and Sintès 2006). Their perception by the Greek hosts is also more favourable, as will be seen later on in this paper. Although historical migration from this area to North America and other international destinations was significant, it is unclear whether these links have been revived in the post-communist era, as is the case with Greece.

Like the ethnic-Greeks, Vlach community members in Albania, in 2001 estimated at between 110,000-140,000 people (Bërxfholi 2005a: 121), have primarily emigrated to Greece. Amongst the migrant pioneers of early 1990s, some argue that a strong motivation for some members of the community was their feared or actual persecution during the communist era (see for instance de Rapper 2005). Their historical kinship ties to Greeks in the border areas, much like in the case of ethnic Greeks, were the first lines of support during the early years of migration there (Sintès 2003; de Rapper 2005). Being recognised as Greeks⁴³ on account of their religion, and often ethnicity, Vlach migrants have been able to benefit from easier access to visas and stay permits. A number of them originating from the Korçë area, for instance, have used this opportunity to set up transnational lives, with their families in Greece and their businesses in Korçë. These cases illustrate the importance of a secure migration status in the host country, either through permanent residence, dual citizenship or other forms, in stimulating circulation migration and transnationalism, particularly for neighbouring countries.

However, the decisive factor and a strong pillar in the immigration policy in the case of Greece has been ethnicity. It has in turn profoundly influenced Albanian migrants' perception and reconstruction of their ethnic and religious identity. Kretsi (2005) shows how the interplay of such state policies and local narratives of origin and identity reflects strategies of power, impacting on origin

⁴² 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 (see de Rapper and Sintès 2006: 23). 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 400,000 (the Greek government has generally regarded all population of Greek Orthodox faith living in Albania as ethnic Greeks; see de Rapper and Sintès 2006). An independent estimate, according to Hall (1994: 86), would be about 120,000. However, these estimates all refer to the pre-emigration period; since 1990 the rate of emigration of southern Albania's ethnic-Greek population has been very high, as evidenced by large-scale population losses recorded in these districts between the 1989 and 2001 censuses, some districts losing half of their populations (King 2003; 2004). A more recent estimate for 2001 provided by Bërxfholi (2005a: 102) stands at about 90,000 (including emigrants). Greece has responded to this depopulation of the ethnic-Greek districts of southern Albania by according generous pensions to ethnic-Greek elderly Albanian citizens, in order to encourage them to continue to live in Albania (Kretsi 2005: 205-6; de Rapper and Sintès 2006: 9).

⁴³ According to Konidaris (2005: 84-5), the Vlachs who could demonstrate knowledge of the Vlach language and culture were recognised as being of Greek ancestry.

communities, including non-migrants. The renegotiations of ambiguous identities occur amongst Albanian Muslims and Christian Orthodox as well, particularly in border areas.

In contrast to the ethnic-Greek Albanians who are treated differently in Greece from the ‘true Greeks’, the ethnic-Macedonian Albanians appear to have received a warmer welcome from Macedonia, at least as far as citizenship rights are concerned. They have obtained Macedonian citizenship, which allows them to travel, work, study and live in Macedonia with few obstacles. The majority of the Macedonian minority, estimated at around 14,000 people in 2001 (Bërxfholi 2005a: 106), lives in a few compact villages in the Prespa area, south-east Albania. Influenced by access to Macedonian citizenship and geographical adjacency, many of them shuttle between the two countries for daily work. However, many have migrated to other countries, much like ethnic Albanians, and similarly others have moved internally, especially to Tirana, Korçë and Elbasan. However, very little systematic research has been carried out on the migration patterns and experiences of this ethnic group.

Other interesting patterns of migration are observed in the Roma and Evgjit communities.⁴⁴ De Soto *et al.* (2005) discuss some of their migration trajectories and patterns, including within Albania, which overall seem to be similar to those of ethnic Albanians. However, there are a number of differences as well, which generally seem to coalesce around these groups’ extreme poverty which both motivates migration and in turn acts to limit its scope and options. Internally, the Roma and Evgjit migrate to work in construction, and in agriculture as day labourers. Commuting seems to be a distinct feature for many who are engaged in begging, and is particularly practiced by women, and children up to the age of 12. The incomes generated are handed over to the head of the household, presumably a man. Most emigration abroad is undocumented as visas are expensive and difficult to obtain. Besides unemployment and poverty – which are much higher amongst these groups than ethnic Albanians – discrimination appears to be a motivating factor for migration as well. Remittances may help families to escape extreme poverty, but it can rarely lift them completely out of poverty. As a result, little is left over to invest in house construction or repairs, let alone commercial businesses. It appears that the poorest of the poor cannot migrate, not only because of lack of necessary financial capital, but also because of limited social capital which would crucially allow them to borrow from businesses locally (i.e. purchase basic food and other items from a local shop ‘on a list’⁴⁵), so that the family survives until the migrant returns. Emigrants also rely heavily on their extended *fis*⁴⁶ to support any vulnerable members of the family left behind such as young children, but also during emigration. Travelling abroad – mostly across the mountains to Greece – is often done in groups, which at times can include up to 300 people (De Soto *et al.* 2005: 80). This figure should be treated with caution, and perhaps is temporally limited to the very early 1990s. First, it is quite difficult

⁴⁴ Roma and Evgjit (‘Egyptians’) are the two main ‘gypsy’ communities in Albania. Bërxfholi (2005a: 128) estimated the number of Roma (including Evgjit) at around 120,000 in 2001.

⁴⁵ A list is an informal credit given by a local shop-owner to a customer, which allows the latter to buy the goods, but pay later. The owner keeps a record of these purchases (in Albanian *listë* – meaning list, record), and strikes them off once they are paid. No fee or interest is usually charged.

⁴⁶ Kinship group which extends much wider and further than amongst Albanians.

to organise such large groups to travel compactly for days under very difficult circumstances. Second, under the clandestine conditions of such emigration, the size of the group would attract the attention of the Greek border guards (and in recent years, of the Albanian ones as well), which would bring the journey to a very fast end. It is interesting to note that these Roma and Evgjit travelling migrant groups usually involve women and children, which is quite different from the pattern observed amongst ethnic Albanians. Most Evgjit migrants in Greece work in construction, followed by agriculture. Roma migrants are mostly employed in agriculture, whilst the next most common income-generating activity is begging, with some participating in construction and in the collection of used clothes. Begging and collecting used clothes are often done by the women and children. Collecting used clothes and bringing them back to Albania was something that was practised since the early 1990s and later developed into a real business for some. It is common knowledge in Albania that the Roma ‘clothed’ the poor in Albania during the most difficult years of the 1990s. Overall, the conclusion seems to be that although emigration of the Roma may have softened extreme poverty in the short term, it has reinforced poverty and social exclusion in the long term (De Soto *et al.* 2005: 85). However, these data and their analysis should be adjusted for the new circumstances under which Albanian migration is taking place in the 2000s. Clandestine migration is now much more difficult, hence frequent group travelling on foot over the mountains is very risky. In the light of these data on the Roma and Evgjit, i.e. their extreme poverty and decreased access to clandestine, less costly migration, it might be safe to assume that the lives of the Roma and Evgjit communities have worsened over recent years. On the other hand, perhaps other opportunities have become available. More systematic research is needed to understand these issues in the changing context of Albania’s transition, and inform policy on poverty alleviation amongst such marginalised groups.

4.6 How does Albanian migration fit into migration theories?

As has been shown, Albanian migration has evolved considerably over the years. It is now possible to look back and examine how its features may be explained and conceptualised within various migration theories. Barjaba and King (2005) suggest three main strands:

Push and pull factors derived from neoclassical migration theory

The strong character of the ‘push’ factors for Albanian emigration has been evident throughout this account. They relate primarily to the disastrous economic conditions of the country; the demographic features of Albanian society marked by a large percentage of young people accompanied by high rates of unemployment; the political and financial crisis of the 1990s etc. The pull factors were higher wages in the West; better living conditions; better opportunities for the future of immigrants’ children; personal development; the glamorous images of life in the West as portrayed by foreign television, particularly in the Italian case (Mai 2002; King *et al.* 2003).

Social networks, family and the new economics of migration

Family has been one of the strongest elements of continuity over many decades in Albanian culture and society. Its importance increased as other forms of (state) support present during communism, collapsed immediately thereafter. Family and kinship relations have been important in the decision-making process to emigrate, much of which is made at the family/household rather than the individual level; in initiating and later on establishing social networks upon arrival in countries of origin; but also as support systems in the communities of origin for those (older) people left behind. However, family is also the institution where the interplay of gendered power relations is strongest. Their projection abroad, combined with issues of social in/exclusion in host societies, have at times reinforced the existing gender geographies of power (King *et al.* 2006). Much chain migration has been based on precisely these forms of social networks. On the other hand, many of what are considered as 'criminal networks' also operate on similar social network structures of family and friends.

Transnationalism and fluid identities

As migrants' communities have been established in host countries, transnationalism has been on the rise. Several members of the same family might have settled in various EU or other destinations. At the same time, having more than one home (in the country of origin and that of destination) is not the exception to the rule anymore. Mobility within and through these social spaces is facilitated as access to transport and communication becomes more affordable for a wider range of Albanian emigrants; on the other hand, visa regimes and border controls erect barriers to such free transnational movements. Cross-border flows of money, goods and symbolic items impact significantly on these transnational fluid identities. Evidence of (emerging) transnational activities is coming forth particularly from research amongst communities living in border areas between Albania and Greece, especially concerned with the ethnic-Greek and Vlach communities, as we saw earlier.

These themes will be illustrated further through the discussion of Albanian migrants' presence in the main host countries, which follows in the next subsection.

4.7 Reception and integration in the host societies

In his model describing the first decade of Albanian emigration, Barjaba (2000) mentions a number of issues which are specific to the two main destination countries: Greece and Italy. These are: migrants' marginalised position in host societies; their treatment by the host population as being worse than any other immigrant group; lack of organisational life in host countries; lack of any meaningful return to Albania. Let us look at how these elements of immigrants' life in these two host countries have changed over the years.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ This section draws heavily on King and Vullnetari (2003) for integration in Italy and Greece and King *et al.* (2003) for the UK case.

The integration of Albanians abroad – which means primarily in Greece and Italy – 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. First we look briefly at the Greek reaction; then at the Italian 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.

Integration in Greece

Since 1990 Albanian migration to Greece has followed three main routes: the two main road crossings at Kakavija (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 *et al.* 1998). In the 1990s, migration was organised in the form of small groups of young males walking for several days, sometimes the whole length of Albania, depending on the region they came from, and then on across the border. Although some women participated in these journeys, their numbers were insignificant, although women and children were more numerous amongst migrating Roma. Accounts of abuse and violence from the Greek army were quite common in those years (for one vivid example see King *et al.* 2003: 50-1). Crossing over the mountains to Greece does continue, albeit on a lower scale. Furthermore, as emigrants have managed to regularise their stay in that country, they can travel more easily through the official border crossing points. Much migration to Greece has been temporary and shuttle migration, which makes estimating the presence of Albanians in Greece difficult, as noted above.⁴⁸ However, it is important to emphasise that this migration is widespread all over Albania, with the majority of the families having one or more members working in Greece.

Albanians are the largest immigrant group in Greece (more than half of the non-EU, non-ethnic Greek immigrant population), which has been one factor in the negative attitudes towards them. Secondly, they also have the youngest age composition compared to other immigrant groups: more than 70 percent of them are in the working age bracket of 16-64 years old, according to the 2001 Greek census (de Zwager *et al.* 2005; Glytsos 2005). The majority of these migrants are males, but the gap has narrowed significantly as compared to the early years of 1990s. Most females have migrated to Greece as dependents, following their male family member. To illustrate this: of the total of residence permits for family reunification given by the Greek authorities between 2003-04, 80 percent went to Albanians (Baldwin-Edwards 2004: 11). A growing presence of females in proportion to that of migrant males is often considered a sign of stabilisation in the host society. In the Albanian case this is confirmed even further by the presence of

⁴⁸ 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.

children, who, according to the same census, numbered around 50,000 enrolled in Greek schools by 2001 (Barjaba and King 2005). A considerable, but not easily quantifiable number of older grandparents is also part of this mosaic. They are mainly involved in support with child-care and other household chores in the family, but sometimes may also provide such services for (older) Greek citizens in the informal labour market (King and Vullnetari 2006).

Albanians are the most widely dispersed immigrant community in Greece. With the exception of a tendency to concentrate slightly more along the Greek-Albanian border, they display very similar spatial patterns to the Greek population, namely large concentration in the Athens and Thessaloniki areas (Baldwin-Edwards 2004; Rovolis and Tragaki 2006). However, they have a higher relative concentration in rural areas than the Greek population (Kasimis *et al.* 2003). Sintès (2003) argues that the historical kinship links between the ethnic Greeks, Vlachs and Albanians living in border areas in both Albania and Greece have been a determining factor in their choice of destination. These emigrants first arrived in the Greek border villages where they met their 'long-lost' relatives, later following similar trajectories as these kin to other parts of Greece. There is also an obvious relationship between the spatial distribution of Albanians and the types of employment available. Urban areas such as Athens, Thessaloniki and the main islands 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; Lazaridis and Psimmenos 2000; Lianos 2001; Hatziprokopiou 2003; Kasimis *et al.* 2003).

In rural Greece Albanians work in agriculture and general labouring, especially during summer peaks of activity when demand for fruit-picking and other labour-intensive tasks is high. But they also do many other 'smaller' jobs around the farm, for which they are not always paid. Immigrant (especially Albanian) labour has replaced virtually all wage labour in Greek agriculture, and is particularly concentrated in areas of intensive farming such as the plains of Thessaly or the olive groves of Corfu (Fakiolas 2003; Kasimis *et al.* 2003). Agricultural work was particularly taken up on large scale in the early 1990s, but it still remains one of the few ways to obtain a (temporary) working permit for Greece, reflecting the needs of the sector and the importance of immigrant labour. 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 – 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).

Greek census data for 2001 shed some light on issues of gendered employment. Key sectors for Albanian male employment are construction (42 percent of the total), agriculture (23 percent), industry (12 percent) and tourism (also 12 percent). For Albanian employed women, 19 percent worked in tourism, 15 percent in agriculture and 9 percent in industry; 52 percent, however, were reported as working in the census category 'other' which includes a large fraction working in domestic services as cleaners, maids, carers etc. (Baldwin-Edwards 2004).

It can be seen that the vast majority of these jobs are low-skilled and insecure. Barjaba and King (2005) suggest that the Greek employment market has to some extent been divided into a 'primary' labour market of secure and 'legal' jobs, and a 'secondary' or 'peripheral' labour sector, which involves low-status jobs. Most Albanian migrants, particularly those who are irregular, are employed in the second sector, where employers are able to take advantage of their illegal status. These are also jobs often stigmatised by the Greeks themselves, who prefer to do the better-status work. The situation has improved in recent years: several studies have shown that there is some upward occupational mobility and hence of the socio-economic living conditions of migrants and their families (Labrianidis and Hatziprokopiou 2005; Maroukis 2005b; Pratsinakis 2005). A major concern in this context is that not all the immigrants who are employed in these low-skilled jobs are unskilled. Many Albanians have undergone de-skilling, as they have been unable to find employment in their profession (Barjaba and King 2005; Hatziprokopiou 2006). The recent regularisations have improved this situation somewhat and a number of highly skilled migrants are employed in universities or in other high-status positions. However, they usually have to work harder than their Greek colleagues, are often less well-paid and still suffer discrimination. In fact, exploitation and racism continue to be widespread. However, whereas these abuses were on the whole tolerated by Albanians in the 1990s, because of their illegal status in the country and the dire economic conditions in their home country, this is less the case today.

A factor of influence and a consequence at the same time has been the increase in their organisational life and activities. This relates to the presence and activities of Albanian immigrant organisations, which have proliferated in recent years (Maroukis 2005a). Three types of associations can be distinguished: those which deal with practical needs of migrants such as documentation, racism etc; those which focus more on cultural politics, usually with a common village/area origin of members; and the ethnic groups of Greek Albanians. Most organisations were created after the first regularisation programme of 1998, which indicates the role of the institutional and legislative framework in participation in public life. The engine behind such associative activity tends to be a social network of friends or/and family. Meanwhile, the gender roles of Albanian society are reflected in the fact that the majority of participants and leaders are men. A major concern of the associations has been the preservation of Albanian identity against prejudice and racism. Of interest also is the insistence of associations on their lack of a narrow political agenda, emphasising their cultural and identity goals. This is partly explained by the communist past, but also by their marginalisation in Greek socio-political agendas. Transnational socio-political spaces are being created nonetheless, as narratives of 'homeland' are shared and reproduced. Fearing cultural uprooting, these organisations also provide for the socialisation of the

second generation, where Albanian language classes can have an important place. We can also note the existence of Home-Town Associations (HTAs), helping develop public works in their villages of origin. However, their intensity and range of activities are far weaker than pre-1940 HTAs, discussed earlier in the paper. In spite of all the above, participation of Albanian immigrants in Greece in migrant organisations is still very low, when compared to other immigrant groups in Greece and in other countries.

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).

The Greek reaction to the immigration of more than half a million Albanians since 1990 has been constructed for the most part by the media, which has played a crucial role in fashioning images of Albania and the Albanians. These have been generally negative. Initially welcomed, Albanians quickly became denigrated with a series of highly negative stereotypes. This vilification has been very severe, reflecting the massive presence of Albanian migrants, the lack of other prominent migrant nationalities, and the antagonistic history of Greco-Albanian relations during and since the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁹ Kapllani and Mai (2005) add another dimension to this stigmatisation. They posit three main overlapping themes that are displayed in the way that the Greek media has presented the Albanian migrants: as inherently criminal, as poor and backward by nature and destined to remain thus, and as the 'invader' and 'traditional enemy' by reason of their ethnicity and religion. This 'othering' of Albanians can be traced in Greece's collective memory of its own past of poverty combined with authoritarianism and resulting in emigration. 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 (Triandafyllidou and Veikou 2002). The policy of the Greek government has also played an important role in this context, where the issue of Albanian immigration to Greece has been closely linked to the status of the ethnic-Greek community in Albania. Thus, immigration has been used as an instrument in Greece's foreign policy towards Albania. In the words of the Greek former Minister of Foreign Affairs '...when... he [Sali Berisha, the President of Albania at the time] wanted to pass a new Constitution... without backing down from his very tough views on the Hellenism of Albania, we decided to send him as a "present" around 150,000 Albanians [deported through the *skoupa* operations]...' (Konidaris 2005: 77).

The standard image of Albanians in Greece has for long been of 'cunning, primitive, untrustworthy' ... 'dangerous' people and 'criminals' (Lazaridis and Wickens 1999: 648). The topic of Albanian criminality has been obsessively pored

⁴⁹ 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).

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 Georgoulas 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 permanently in Greece.⁵⁰ 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 'multiple layers of oppression' (Lazaridis 2000) and confined to 'periphrastic spaces' (Psimmenos 2000) – 'fenced in' and brutally excluded from mainstream Greek society. Other writers join in, referring to Albanians as threatening to 'dilute Greek identity and cultural homogeneity' and as presenting 'security risks' (Danopoulos and Danopoulos 2004). And yet, Albanians have been able to negotiate their way round and through these exclusionary barriers, by playing on the shared Balkan identity. 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; 2006).

⁵⁰ Two reasons can be suggested for this. First, to do so would be to encourage further 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, learning of the Greek language as immigrants etc.) so that it is increasingly difficult for the Greek authorities to determine who is a 'true' ethnic-Greek Albanian.

Integration in Italy

Albania shares a sea border with Italy, which although more difficult to cross than the land border with Greece, has been the scene of migration paths, hopes, aspirations, but also numerous tragedies. The first post-1990 Albanian immigrants to Italy were the embassy people, followed by the boat-people. Speedboats or *gomone*⁵¹ were the main means of emigration to Italy for many years, often during the night and amidst highly dangerous climatic and sea conditions. As migrants regularised and more employment or study opportunities became available, ferries and airplanes are increasingly used in recent years.

At only 10-13 percent of the total immigrant population (depending on the statistics used), the Albanian presence in Italy has less impact demographically than in Greece, but is still considerable (Barjaba and King 2005). It is important to note that during the 1990s, Albanians were the fastest rising immigrant nationality in Italy (Piperno 2002; Bonifazi and Sabatino 2003).⁵² Here too, male migrants are in the majority, but the females doubled their share between 1992-99 and they represented more than 40 percent of Albanian immigrants by 2003 (Barjaba and King 2005; Caponio 2005). Furthermore, the absolute numbers of females are higher than for any other immigrant group (Bonifazi and Sabatino 2003). In addition, the number of children enrolled in schools between 1995-96 and 2000-01 increased sixfold (Piperno 2002: 12; de Zwager *et al.* 2005: 17). 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). Family reunification has been high, and has also included older grandparents, although entry requirements have been very stringent and discriminatory. The family-oriented structure of Albanian migration is one which is completely overlooked by the popular imagery of the group, but one which has been important in their socio-economic integration in Italy. 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.

Evidence about the socio-economic integration of Albanians in Italy portrays an increasingly positive picture (King and Mai 2004; Barjaba and King 2005). First, Albanians have lower rates of unemployment than other immigrant nationalities. Secondly, Albanians are employed in a variety of sectors. Although there is some concentration of males in industry and construction, 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. This range of gendered employment sectors mirrors the pattern in Greece as noted above. Especially in the construction sector and related 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). 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 at the level of their

⁵¹ From the Italian *gommoni*, meaning large, fast rubber dinghies.

⁵² Since around 2000 other national groups, such as Romanians and Ukrainians, have grown proportionally faster.

qualifications. There are also an estimated 12,000 Albanian students enrolled at Italian universities, especially in Apulia (Bari, Lecce) and Rome (AIIS 2005: 23).

The wide spatial distribution throughout the country, including a presence in many rural areas and small towns, is also considered as a positive indicator, as is their high degree of informal social contact with Italians (Piperno 2002; King and Mai 2004). Results from one study suggested that inter-marriage between Albanians and Italians was considered as a sign of integration, although gender differences were observed: when reporting on willingness to marry an Italian partner, Albanian female respondents far outnumbered Albanian male respondents (Dervishi 2003). The gender roles in the family where one partner is Italian are apparently perceived as emancipatory for the Albanian women, but as ‘threatening the authority’ of Albanian men. Kelly’s (2005) findings from her study of Albanian immigrant women in Bologna confirm this perception of emancipation through migration to a culture that places women in a more favourable gender position.

Very much like in the Greek case, the Italian response to the immigration of Albanians during the 1990s was also driven by the media, and was very negative (King and Mai 2002). Whilst the first arrivals of the ‘Adriatic brethren’ (Zinn 1996) in March 1991 were greeted with generally positive media reports, where undertones of patronising these ‘pitiful, backward and helpless’ people were nevertheless not lacking, the reception changed very soon after that. By the time the August 1991 immigrants arrived, the press discourse of an ‘Albanian invasion’, of ‘ungrateful, lazy and violent criminals’ flooding the coastal towns of Italy, was ever-present (King *et al.* 2003). The breakdown of law and order over much of Albania following the pyramid crisis, and the resultant exodus of spring 1997 brought a renewed Italian media feeding-frenzy. The full range of negative thematic images of Albania and Albanians was deployed: 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’. Bonifazi and Sabatino (2003) show that this association of Albanians with criminality is not supported by official statistics, either of types of crimes (petty crime convictions amongst Albanians were lower than any other immigrant group), or of rates of conviction which again are lower than any of the dominant immigrant groups. Furthermore, most offences are within their ethnic group; Albanian men have been associated most with prostitution of women primarily from Albania. Finally, there is a rather serious problem of unaccompanied minors, often as young as 14 or 15, sent by their families to find work as independent migrants.⁵³

The 1991 and 1997 Albanian exoduses to Italy came at a time of profound change and identity crisis for Italy itself related to its position in the post-Cold War era, the subsequent transformation of its role in the EU and to its internal political battles and identity crisis. King and Mai (2002) and Mai (2002) provide a detailed analysis of all these and other factors, which influenced the image of Albanian immigrants in Italy, as well as the Italo-Albanian relationship in the 1990s.

The reaction of Albanians to their stigmatisation has been internalisation by some, and taking action against the widespread prejudice by others. Similar to

⁵³ See, e.g. Campani *et al.* (2002). In Rome, for example, 40 percent of immigrant unaccompanied minors are from Albania.

Greece, this was a strong reason for setting up migrant organisations, which in recent years have proliferated in numbers and activities. For a superficial look, one need only search the Internet and the array of these in Italy becomes apparent. Chiodi and Devole (2005) have carried out a more systematic study into these issues. They argue that the majority of organisations originates in the late 1990s, which coincides with the time Albanian migration to Italy started to mature after successive regularisation programmes and some years of experience in the Italian society. Most organisations are present and active in the North of Italy; similar to the Greek case, the social network of family and friends is their core. Interestingly, they were not set up to respond to practical needs of migrants, inferring thus that participation is out of reach for the most disadvantaged migrants. Again we note the lack of politics in the agendas of most organisations, concentrating mainly on cultural and identity issues, at times reflecting also a transnational character when organising twinning activities with local NGOs in Albania. Fearing cultural uprooting, these organisations also provide for the socialisation of the second generation, where Albanian language classes take an important place. In spite of the positive picture painted by Chiodi and Devole, there still is a considerable lack of associative life within the Albanian community in Italy. A number of factors may account for this fragility and fragmentation: the bitter experience of forced collectivisation during communism (Mai 2005); the geographical dispersion of the Albanian community around the country, so that it often lacks critical mass in many areas (Schuster 2005); the feeling of similarity with the Italian population and the resulting lack of need to assert difference through association (Kelly 2005).

And yet, despite media stereotyping as undesirables and criminals, and despite being, in public opinion polls, the least preferred immigrant group, Albanians have achieved considerable success in integrating into Italy (King and Mai 2004; 2007).

Integration in the UK

Traces of post-communist migration from Albania to the UK can be found from the early 1990s and are recorded as early as 1992 in the figures for asylum-seekers in the UK; but the numbers remained insignificant until 1997, when there is an apparent increase and then again during and immediately after the Kosovo crisis of 1999-2000 (King *et al.* 2003: 27). Systematic academic research on Albanians in the UK, however, is limited to the studies of King *et al.* (2003) and Dalipaj (2005).

This migration was primarily an onward migration, usually after emigrants had first spent some time in Greece, having migrated on to Italy and then arriving via France and Belgium (King *et al.* 2003). However, direct emigration from Albania is not excluded, particularly for those early 1990s arrivals.⁵⁴ Considering the geographical distance and the lack of strong historical connections between Albania and the UK, only a very small and insignificant older diaspora developed

⁵⁴ The author of this paper has personally spoken to women who arrived in the UK in the late 1980s as part of the Albanian government's training programmes of its cadre abroad; they never returned to Albania. She has also come across other anecdotal evidence of Albanians arriving in the UK from the early 1990s, although the numbers are presumed to be negligible. It could be suggested that a number of these were students and other 'elite' migrants who came to the UK under various educational schemes.

in the UK, first with the residence of King Zog, his family and his entourage after they fled Albania in 1939, later on reinforced by a handful of Legality Party loyalists fleeing the communists in 1945-50. The Anglo-Albanian Association which was set up by the Albanologist Audrey Herbert in these early years, consisting mainly of pro-Albanian British activists, later embraced some Albanian émigrés. However, it has so far kept a certain distance from the new Albanian community which developed since the 1990s.

Two major groups can be distinguished in this most recent Albanian migration to the UK: labour migrants and economic refugees on the one hand, and students on the other. The first is largely male-dominated and females have usually joined during the process of family reunification. Most of these migrants are from the North of the country, primarily the Kukës, Pukë and Shkodër regions, with very few from the South. King *et al.* (2006) recently reported that migration has brought very few changes in gender roles and relationships amongst this group of Albanian immigrants in the UK: these roles have remained by and large 'traditional'. Thus patriarchal power structures of Albanian families have been retained, negating the supposed 'emancipatory' function of emigration. However, this finding needs to be contextualised in that the sample included emigrants originating exclusively from Northern Albania, where gender relations have been much slower to change. Furthermore, these relationships were set in a family migration setting, which is overwhelmingly the case for this group of Albanian migrants. No systematic knowledge exists about how emigration and its gendered aspects are experienced by the second group of new immigrants in the UK, that of students, which comprises mainly single young men and women.

Irregular status in the country has been a problem for a number of Albanian emigrants, and they feel they are marginalised in the British community. A general amnesty for asylum-seekers passed in October 2004 gave a chance to a number of them to regularise their situation in the country. Dalipaj (2005: 41) indicates that the ambiguity of their immigration status in the UK has created major psychological problems for them, resulting amongst other things in weak ties within the Albanian community in the UK, a refusal to identify with or relate to other Albanians and a high degree of assimilation. The fact that many entered the UK under the guise of Kosovan refugees, and continue to maintain this pretence, is a further source of their problematic and confused identity. Organisational community life is limited to a handful of cultural and student organisations, whose key aims have principally involved the Kosovo question and the improvement of the image of Albanians in the UK.

Integration in the USA

As in the UK case, contemporary Albanian migration to the USA remains under-researched, although numbers have been on the increase and its typology reveals diverse features. According to Trix (2001), Albanian migration to the USA has evolved in four main stages: the early migration between 1880s-1945, principally labour migrants and refugees from the wars (see section 2.2); migration from Albania between 1945-60, principally political refugees from the communist opposition there (see section 3.2); migration between 1960-80s of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo and Macedonia for economic and political reasons; and finally, the

post-1990s migration involving primarily migrants leaving Albania after the collapse of the communist regime, as well as refugees fleeing the Milosevic terror in Kosovo. Albanians in the USA are spread throughout the country, but the largest concentrations are to be found in the states of New York and Michigan, although other important centres have formed around other cores of historical Albanian diaspora communities, such as Boston and Connecticut. Albanian community organisations for instance estimate that by 2000 around 70,000 Albanian-Americans lived in Michigan alone (Trix 2001).

The USA has become an important migration destination for Albanians for a number of reasons. First, the historic Albanian diaspora there has been strong not only in terms of numbers, but also in terms of economic and political power (Nazi 2000; Ragaru 2002). This diaspora became one of the strongest pull factors for the post-1990 migrants, particularly as entry was facilitated by accessible procedures for relatives of Albanian-Americans. Second, the USA government has for decades allowed migrants to enter through the annual Diversity Visa programme, which draws winners through a lottery process and requires that migrants have 12 years of schooling or the equivalent work experience. Considering the high share of Albanian population which had completed 12 years of education under communism, this became an option available to a large section of the population, particularly since it ensured family migration. Third, a high proportion of Albanian scholars and professionals has benefited from various US governmental and private institutional scholarships either for studies or for training in the USA (Gëdeshi *et al.* 1999). A number of those on temporary visa schemes, including government representatives, decide to remain there permanently. For instance between 2001-05, 65 Albanian diplomats including ten ambassadors in the USA refused to return to Albania after the completion of their duty (Fischer 2005: 196). Fourth, the USA has for years been the icon of democracy, freedom and economic prosperity for Albanians, as was also shown in the recent rapturous reception accorded to President George Bush during his visit to Albania in June 2007. And last, as migrants' networks consolidate, chain migration, especially family reunification and formation, has had the expected cumulative effects (Massey *et al.* 1993). Besides family reunification, labour migration and pursuing studies or a (academic) career, a number of individuals and families have also sought asylum in the USA (some under a Kosovan identity). Fischer (2005) argues that the asylum process for Albanians in the USA (as for others) has been often arbitrary and occasionally flawed. One of the reasons given is that Albania is considered by the US authorities as a 'friendly' state, and human rights abuses therefore are overlooked by US immigration officials.⁵⁵ Data from the Department of Homeland Security (2007) support this; for instance only 42 Albanians were granted asylum affirmatively in the USA in 2006, whereas more than 500 had to go through the courts to obtain this status. Because legal migration is not always an option, other ways are sought to reach the 'Promised Land' of America; smuggling networks have played a key role in this context, at times channeling migrants'

⁵⁵ An interesting link can be made here to the communist era when Albania's isolation made international scrutiny on human rights abuses in the country next to impossible. In both cases, human rights have been subjugated to political agendas, whether those of the communists then, or the American government in present times.

trajectories through Mexico, Cuba, Dominican Republic and other Latin American countries (see also Fischer 2005).

As with the early migrants at the turn of the last century, contemporary Albanian migrants' motivations have been a mixture of political and economic factors, which have been discussed throughout this paper. However, in contrast to most early migrants who considered migration to America as a temporary project – at least before the 1930s – and planned to return to Albania, contemporary migrants plan to make America their permanent home.⁵⁶ Another difference relates to migrants' educational level: whilst most early migrants were illiterate or had very limited schooling, contemporary migrants have a higher level of education and include a large share of highly skilled professionals, as stated earlier. In terms of gender, contemporary migration is also much more varied, and includes entire families, as well as independent female migrants. Migration to the USA is experienced by highly skilled women as an '*alternative way of living*' (emphasis in the original), beyond the economics of work, but including professional self-fulfillment and freedom from patriarchal structures and discrimination in Albania (Orgocka 2005: 144). Once again, this is a topic that would benefit greatly from further research.

5. Trends and patterns of internal migration

Whilst knowledge on Albanian international migration continues to be generated at a rapid pace, internal migration still remains under-researched in spite of its importance and relevance to the country's (under)development. To some extent, this shows the bias in research as related to funding and strategic interests. The attention given to international migration reflects the concerns of host societies, and particularly host-country governments, about the arrival and integration of Albanian immigrants in their territories. Scholars based in these countries have consequently more funding opportunities and, it could be argued, are also guided by such funding in research priorities. It comes therefore as no surprise that the vast majority of studies on Albanian migrants have been carried out in Greece and Italy, the two countries where Albanians have mainly emigrated.

Of the few papers that exist on internal migration, a number of them are rather descriptive and exploratory, revealing very little beyond general trends and figures (see for instance the collection of articles published in 2005 in the Albanian journal on geographical studies: *Studime Gjeografike*, 15). This limited production reflects the limited financial resources of the majority of local researchers to carry out research independent of imposed agendas. Although studies are on the increase, the significant changes in internal migration patterns, volumes and behaviour which have taken place over the last 17 years in Albania, have yet to be analysed to their full potential.

This section follows a similar analytical sequence to that used to structure the previous section on emigration: first, a brief overview of figures; followed by

⁵⁶ Personal correspondence [26 February 2007] with Dr. Dennis L. Nagi (see footnote 12).

an attempt to develop a typology of the patterns of movement observed; and closing with some brief comments on the social dimensions of internal migration.

5.1 Figures

Data specific to contemporary internal migration in Albania were scarce during the 1990s, but the situation has improved since. These data derive from three main sources: population censuses, population registers and the Living Standards Measurement Surveys (LSMSs). Before continuing with the detailed description of data available, a few general words need saying about these sources of information. First, the census data. The two most relevant censuses for deriving data on contemporary Albanian migration were those of 1989 and 2001, which recorded population *present* at the time of enumeration. However, as with all censuses, they only give a snapshot of the demographic situation at a particular point in time. They did not account for those who might have migrated from their internal destination somewhere internationally and then returned again elsewhere, temporary migrants, or those who died during the inter-censal period. The situation was further complicated by changes in the territorial administrative organisation of the country, as well as in the institutional re-organisation of the agencies responsible for collecting and analysing national statistics.⁵⁷ INSTAT, the new national statistics agency, was responsible for the 2001 census. The second source of data, the population registers, records *resident* population at the commune/municipality level. The data are reported monthly to INSTAT. However, the accuracy and reliability of these data have been questioned by various authorities. First, the systems are largely manual and thus very slow to respond to rapid population changes, especially due to migration. In a recent report of the Korçë Regional Council (2005: 15) for instance, the authors emphasise that '[D]ue to its high rate of internal and foreign migrations, it has been difficult to keep accurate official data on the present-day population in the communes and municipalities'. Moreover, it is in the individual commune/municipality's interest not to quantify the extent of the population loss, for fear of losing resources and being downgraded (Arrehag *et al.* 2005). The third source of information on internal migrants has been the Living Standards Measurement Surveys (LSMSs) of 2002 and 2005.⁵⁸ These LSMSs have a very sophisticated (although somewhat long) module on migration and a number of studies have been generated as a result, as we shall see later.

The data available make it now possible do draw regional trends and matrices of internal migration. Nevertheless, the limitations mentioned above need to be taken into account when considering the various data which will be presented

⁵⁷ According to the new administrative organisation, Albania consists of 12 prefectures (Kukës, Dibër, Shkodër, Lezhë, Durrës, Tiranë, Elbasan, Fier, Vlorë, Berat, Gjirokastër, Korçë), 36 districts, 43 municipalities and 315 communes. Each prefecture is composed of 3 districts as an average. Each district is composed of 1-2 municipalities corresponding to the main cities and 8-9 communes. Each commune has an average of 9 villages. For a map and naming of the 36 *rrethe* or districts refer back to Figure 2.

⁵⁸ The LSMSs use a geographical division according to which Albania is divided into 3 regions: 1- North: prefectures of Shkodër, Kukës, Dibër; 2- Central/Coastal: prefectures of Tiranë, Durrës, Lezhë, Fier, Elbasan; 3- South: prefectures of Berat, Gjirokastër, Korçë and Vlorë.

in the following analysis. The analysis of figures, trends and patterns of internal migration that follows is based primarily on these statistics and their quantitative and qualitative interpretation by various authorities (Dervishi 2001; Fuga and Dervishi 2002: 150-67; INSTAT 2002; Bërxfholi *et al.* 2003; King *et al.* 2003; King and Vullnetari 2003; Carletto *et al.* 2004; Bërxfholi 2005b; Zezza *et al.* 2005).

The significance of internal movements is apparent from several angles, not least numbers. Based on data from population registers, Bërxfholi (2005b: 169) suggests that, between 1992 and 2000, an average of 150,750 people per year migrated internally. Of these, only 36 percent moved to an urban centre, whereas the remaining 64 percent moved to rural areas, including the peri-urban areas of Tirana, Durrës, Shkodër, Korçë etc. Cumulatively, this presents us with a total of 1,356,750 internal migrants within these 9 years, or almost 40 percent of the total population of 2000. This is almost double the number of international migrants recorded by the census for the period 1989-2001.⁵⁹ INSTAT (2004a) gives much lower figures of internal migration constituting only 10 percent of the total population, based on the 2001 census figures measuring the change of domicile between 1989-2001. Based on these census data, UNDP-Albania (2005: 71) gives a total number of 400,000 for internal migrants. According to Carletto *et al.* (2004: 27, Table 8) 355,230 Albanians had moved from one district to another in the 1989-2001 inter-censal period. Part, but not all, of the confusion raised by these different estimates of the size of internal migration derives from the geographical units used. Hence inter-prefecture migration will be less than inter-district migration, which will in turn be less than inter-commune/municipality moves. Then there is the difference between gross or aggregate migration and net flows.

The district that has received most interest in research has been Tirana. According to the official census records its population increased from 368,000 in 1989 to almost 520,000 (519,720) in 2001 (INSTAT 2002; 2004b: 117); whereas according to the population registers the figure was almost 750,000 (744,024) by 2003 (Tirana Regional Council 2005: 19). However, according to some unofficial estimates, Tirana district contained 800,000 people already by 2002 (De Soto *et al.* 2002: 113). Estimates for 2005 bring the number to almost a million (Lulo 2005). Tirana's estimated growth rates of 5-7 percent annually are amongst the highest in Europe, and most of this growth – around 3-5 percent annually – is attributed to migration (Lulo 2005: 97). Indeed, the district absorbed the largest numbers of internal migrants in the 1989-2001 inter-censal period – around 160,000 new residents – almost 100,000 of whom settled within the city (Zezza *et al.* 2005: 189). 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. Almost three-quarters (73.6 percent) of the population recorded in the Tirana district in the 2001 census lived in urban areas, but growth in peri-ruban areas such as Bathore has been quite intensive too. This population concentration has resulted in Tirana reaching the highest density rates in the country at more than 600 inhabitants/km² (Tirana Regional Council 2005).

⁵⁹ The comparison is simply to give an indication of the scale. This comparison is not altogether possible because of the different timescales included, as well as the different methodology used.

The census data also give an interesting picture of internal migration from the gender perspective. According to such data, the majority of internal movers, 54 percent, are women (INSTAT 2004a: 22). This is in contrast to the international migration data, where the majority of migrants are men. However, the differences in both cases are not overwhelming. The data has to be considered cautiously because of the limitations mentioned earlier in this section.

5.2 Typologies of internal movement

It is important to note that the typology of internal migration in post-1990 Albania resembles very closely that of 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 to those areas 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 within these cities, 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.

As in the case of emigration, migrants started moving internally as soon as the communist regime fell. According to Carletto *et al.* (2004: 7), this migration between 1990-93 marks one of the two peaks in internal movements, followed by the most important peak between 1996-98 as a result of the collapse of the pyramid schemes. Otherwise, internal migration has remained fairly stable over time. Of those who moved to urban Tirana and the Coastal region, the majority did so after 1995. In almost three-quarters of the post-1990 internal moves, migration of households was attributed to economic reasons such as starting a new job, looking for a better job, or having insufficient land.

A spatial typology of a number of internal migration directions can be identified as follows. Actually, two ‘types of typology’ are discussed: first, those based on geographical regions; and second, those based on settlement type (rural versus urban). Figure 3 provides a collage of maps which underpin some of the following discussion.

Inter-regional

These are movements from one region (as defined in the LSMS) to another within Albania. According to the 2001 census, 182,600 people moved from one region to another in the inter-censal period. Slightly more than 90 percent of these were directed towards the Central/Coastal region. Of the total internal migrant population, 60 percent comes from the North, around 30 percent from the South, and the rest from the Central/Coastal regions (INSTAT 2004a). Thus, three major regional movements can be distinguished country-wide:

- Northern Albania, especially the inland, north-eastern districts (Tropojë, Pukë, Kukës, Dibër, Mirditë and Mat) is characterised by population loss, primarily through internal movements. Most internal migrants have relocated to the Tirana and Durrës area in central Albania. Some

international migration has taken place, primarily to Greece, Italy and the UK, but this is dwarfed by the volume of internal out-migration.

- Central/Coastal Albania, especially the districts of Tirana and Durrës, have been the main destination areas for most internal migrants from all over the country, but more so for those from the North. The position of these districts as the administrative, economic, cultural and demographic core of the country has been a trigger and a consequence of this inward mobility. It is an area which has gained in population, although some international migration has taken place, primarily to Italy.
- Southern Albania is a region of out-migration, particularly from the mountainous hinterland. Internal migration has been directed towards the central and coastal regions of the country. However, this is dwarfed by population losses resulting from international migration, especially to Greece, but also to Italy and the USA. Some of the highest population losses were recorded here in 2001 as compared to 1989: 55 and 45 percent respectively in the districts of Delvinë and Sarandë, for instance (INSTAT 2002).

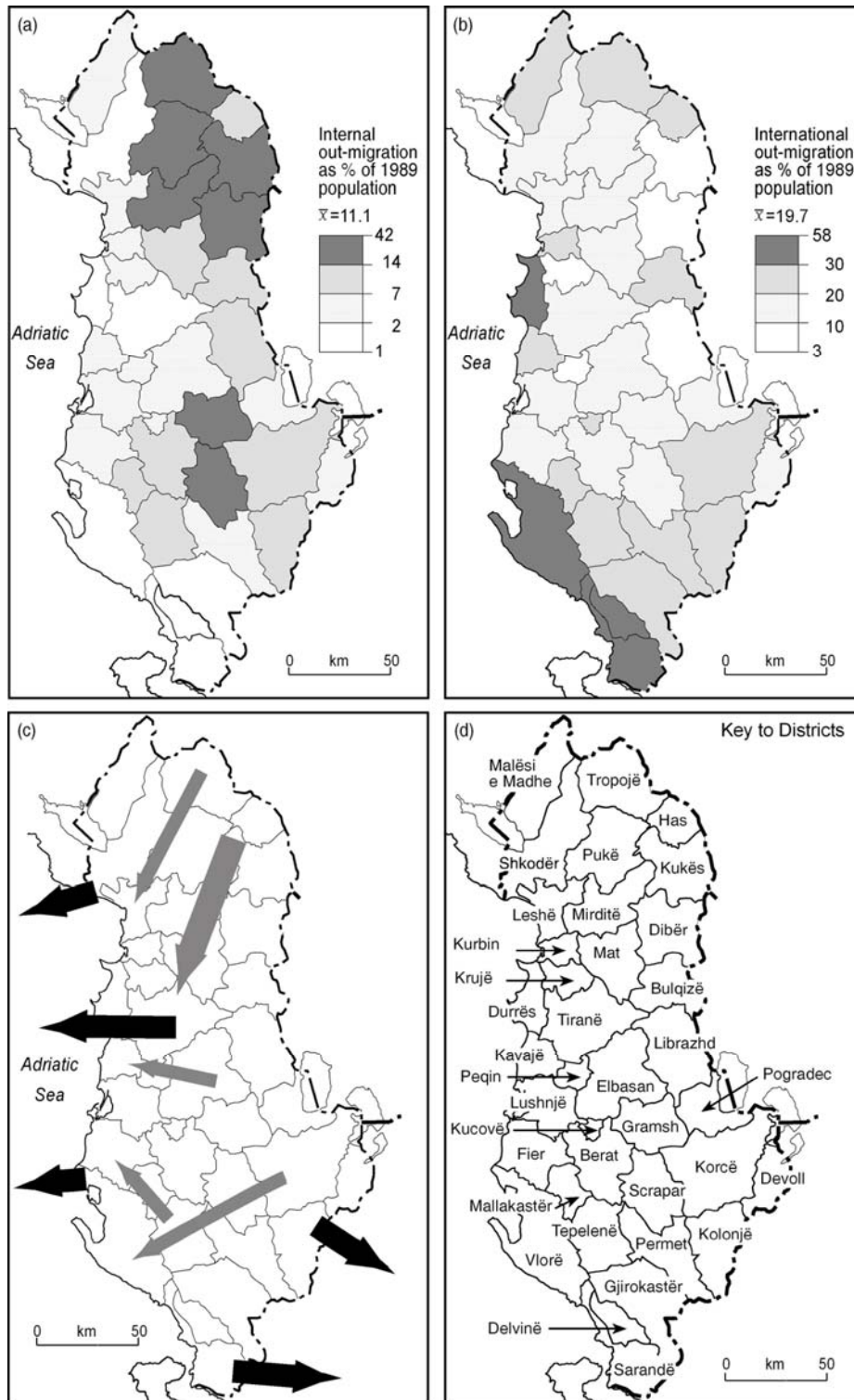


Figure 3 Albania: migration patterns 1989-2001

Intra-regional

Most of this type of internal movement has been rural-urban migration, primarily directed towards the main administrative city of the region. Carletto *et al.* (2004: 7)

find that the most important intra-regional migrations are those within the Central region, inferring a large-scale rural-urban migration. Part of this migration might include the *diverted migrants* resulting from the communist internal migration policies discussed earlier, who after 1990s had the chance to move to the cities of Tirana and Durrës. Intra-regional movements in the North region are also considerable, again principally rural-urban migrations; the city of Shkodër has become a major destination for in-migration from the rural hinterland in the north of the country (INSTAT 2004a: 17; King 2005: 144; Axhemi 2005: 106). For instance, according to a recent survey, slightly more than half of in-migrants in the city of Shkodër originate from the district of Malësia e Madhe (Shkodra Regional Council 2005: 16). A similar pattern can be observed in Gjirokastrë, where the majority of the city's population increase is due to in-migration from the district's (especially mountainous) rural areas and from adjoining districts such as Tepelenë and Përmet (Kosta 2005). However, this is not always the case, as the situation in the region of Vlorë shows, where the majority of migrants within this prefecture head towards Sarandë further south, rather than towards the city (and administrative centre of the prefecture) of Vlorë, even though both are located on the coast (INSTAT 2004a: 17). But certain elements such as ethnicity (ethnic Greeks in the hinterland of Sarandë), spill-over effects from tourism in Corfu etc., may be of greater impact.

Inter-prefecture

A total of 252,700 persons moved from one prefecture to another in the intercensal period. The prefecture of Tirana was the destination of over half, Durrës following next with almost 20 percent of such internal migrants. Of particular interest in this category of movements is their urban-bound share, which accounts for almost 60 percent of total inter-prefecture migrants (INSTAT 2004a: 15). Census data indicate that inter-prefecture movements overlap to a certain extent with the inter-regional movements outlined above. Furthermore, data gathered at a more detailed level of administrative division reveal better indicators for analysis. Unfortunately, very limited data are available beyond those at district-level, which are analysed below as the last geographically-based typology.⁶⁰

Inter-district

These are movements from one district to another (see Figure 3a). They can be inter-regional or within the same region. Carletto *et al.* (2004) and Zezza *et al.* (2005) present a number of findings based on the 1989 and 2001 census results and the 2002 LSMS data for migration trends at inter-district and even at commune level. Thus, the districts with the highest population increase in absolute numbers between 1989 and 2001 were Tirana, Durrës, Lushnjë, Fier and Vlorë – in that order. Tirana recorded the highest in-migration increase with 159,000 new residents, followed by Durrës with 46,000 in-migrants during this time (Carletto *et al.* 2004: 9; Zezza *et al.* 2005: 189). Top senders of internal migrants are the districts of Kukës, Dibër, Tropojë and Pukë in the North with around 30 percent of their

⁶⁰ The only study that provides some commune-level data to my knowledge is that of Zezza *et al.* (2005).

population moving internally; Berat and Korçë in the central-south and south-east respectively also display high levels of internal migrants (INSTAT 2004a: 19; Carletto *et al.* 2004: 8). The first group are primarily poor areas and geographically landlocked, with very few livelihood opportunities available locally. They have the highest rates of unemployment, and the highest headcount poverty rates in the country reaching 40 percent in Kukës for instance (Lundström and Ronnås 2006: 24-25). In the case of Korçë, which is a relatively wealthy district, this might be out-migration from its mountainous hinterland, in combination with harsh climate conditions during winter-time. Inter-district movements are observed over long distances, as in the case of internal migrants from Dibër and Kukës in the North, but also Korçë in the South, moving to Tirana and Durrës districts. Tirana for instance absorbed around 70 percent of the migrants from Dibër and Kukës, and up to half of the migrants from other sending districts. But, moving from one district to another also has a strong regional character. For instance, in-migrants in Fier are primarily from the surrounding districts of Mallakastër, Berat, Tepelenë and Vlorë; those in Vlorë come principally from contiguous Fier and Tepelenë, nearby Berat, but also from far-away Korçë. In the case of Lushnjë there is a mix of in-migrants from contiguous districts such as Berat and Elbasan, and further away ones, such as Librazhd and Gramsh, but which together form a continuous larger area.

A more varied picture is revealed when considering data at the commune level. Even within districts that are considered as sources of out-migration, there are small pockets of in-migration, usually around the municipality of the district. Such is the case of Sarandë as a major sending district, versus Sarandë municipality – a clear in-migration zone within the district itself (Zezza *et al.* 2005: 188).

Rural-urban

As one might expect, rural-urban migration has been the defining feature of Albania's internal movements in the last 17 years. The most serious population loss is observed in the rural North, as well as in the rural South, particularly villages high up in the mountains. On the other hand, the country's urban population increased from 35 to 42 percent of the total between 1989 and 2001 (INSTAT 2002).⁶¹ The biggest increase of 45 percent was recorded for the urban population of Durrës-Tirana-Elbasan axis in the central region (King and Vullnetari 2003: 45). However, the majority of internal migrants did *not* move to officially-defined urban areas: only around 40 percent of them settled in urban areas (Bërxfholi 2005b: 169). To this urban population growth an unknown number of urban-urban migrations should be added – see immediately below. The growth of urban population in the two main cities of this region, Tirana, the capital and main airport, and Durrës, the main port city, has been spectacular. Tirana alone is estimated to be home to one third of the country's total population by 2007. Some of the key impacts of the unplanned and chaotic urbanisation of Albania are discussed later on.

⁶¹ One must also bear in mind that some of this increase resulted from yet another change in the country's administrative division, which brought the number of centres categorised as urban from 67 in 1989 to 74 in 2001 (Bërxfholi 2000; 2005b: 163).

Urban-urban

Although not quantified and researched, inter-urban migration flows are also part of the overall internal migration map of Albania. For instance in 2001, two-thirds of in-migrants in the city of Tirana came from other urban centres (Heller *et al.* 2005: 70). These inter-urban flows are directed particularly from the smaller urban industrial centres created during the communist era, towards the larger and more important cities along the coast. Heavily affected by the closure in the early 1990s of industries located there, the former became major sources of out-migration (UNDP-Albania 2000). Since most of these urban centres were located in the mountainous north-east of the country, they are part of the much larger regional movement from that area towards Tirana and the coast (Rugg 1994).

Rural-rural

It would appear that not much rural-rural migration has taken place during the last 17 years, since there was now an opportunity to move to the city itself. Thus, most attention has focused on the rapid urbanisation of the country. However, rural-rural migration has not been negligible. INSTAT (2004a: 15) claims that the 2001 census counted almost 40 percent of internal migrants who moved from one prefecture to another in the inter-censal period as settling in rural areas. Almost half of these rural in-migrants settled in the rural part of Tirana prefecture, which presumably refers to the growth of peri-urban areas such as Bathore. High levels of such migration are also noted for Durrës and Fier in terms of absolute numbers. With the exception of Durrës, Elbasan, Gjirokastër and Vlorë prefectures, more migrants moved to rural than to urban areas in all other prefectures. Presumably these record inter-regional migration to peri-urban areas, but also rural-rural migrations within the same prefecture, especially from the mountainous hinterland towards the river valleys and the peri-urban areas around the core administrative city. Such movements have been noted by a number of Albanian researchers such as Axhemi (2005), who discusses the case of the Shkodër area, or Kosta (2005) who discusses that of Gjirokastër. Based on preliminary data for 2000-01, INSTAT (2004a: 16) notes that rural in-migration is especially high in Dibër, Gjirokastër and Shkodër prefectures. This may reflect the changing patterns of internal migration due to increased cost of housing and further socio-economic polarisation, but perhaps also a return of the older people to rural areas, since there appears to be an over-representation of the over-65s in some of these flows. However, the census data itself does not allow us to find out the reasons behind such movements. A different figure is presented by Bërxfholi (2005b: 169), who, based on population registers which record actual population resident (rather than present as in the case of the census), indicates that over 60 per cent of all internal migrants per year, between 1992-2000, settled in rural areas (the opposite of INSTAT census conclusions). However, as in the census case, here too this rural settlement includes the peri-urban areas of Tirana and Durrës.⁶² In any case, although there has been a large-scale urbanisation, Albania remains a predominantly rural country.

⁶² It is important to note that the two figures might not be comparable, because of the different units they represent (total internal migrants per year versus movements from one prefecture to another); timeframe (1992-2000 versus only two points in time in the inter-censal period-1989 and

5.3 Characteristics of internal migrants

Census data⁶³ reveal that internal migrants are young, with almost 46 percent of inter-prefecture migrants being younger than 30 in 2001 (INSTAT 2004a: 21). In contrast to emigration, women are more likely to migrate internally, especially for younger ages – 54 percent of internal migrants by 2001 being women. This might reflect the family character of internal migration, which in contrast to much emigration involves the movement of the entire family and is more permanent in character. Cila (2006: 14) suggests that consequently, contrary to what the international literature on internal migration posits for other parts of the world, internal migration in Albania might present a unique case of family-dominated permanent internal migration. Thus, the term labour migration might not be quite accurate to describe the situation in Albania.

After a move internally, the younger males may emigrate abroad, which might explain their lower numbers recorded internally in 2001, whereas younger women, especially with lower educational levels, emigrate less frequently on their own abroad. It is in the age-group of 40-64 years that men are more represented in the internal flows than women; this age-group is on the other hand less represented amongst international migrants. The higher percentages of women up to the age of 30 could also be explained by the shares of female students in universities, which are all located in cities. Although the share of female migrants with a tertiary education at the age of 32 and above is almost half that of men, this gap closes rapidly for younger ages (attaining equal shares for those aged 22-31). We may thus infer that internal migration has benefited women generally, and the impacts are more obvious for younger ages. However, when considering employment figures, around 40 percent of migrants are not working, and the unemployment rate amongst migrant women is 41 percent, almost double that of men. Unfortunately, the census data tell us very little about the qualitative features behind these numbers, and the presumptions presented in this analysis are drawn from general knowledge of these internal movements.

6. Dynamics of emigration and internal mobility and their developmental impact

This section discusses the links between international and internal migration and their combined impact on Albanian development, based on perspectives drawn from the existing literature. It opens with a brief sketch of some of these links in the Albanian context, and goes on to discuss the joint impact of these two main migration types in terms of remittances; demography, gender and generations; and socio-economic, political and cultural outcomes.

2001); and methodology used to measure these movements. The figures are used to provide some hints of the scale of movement, not to quantify their exact magnitude.

⁶³ This section is based on the 2001 census results, which record the characteristics of internal migrants over the 1989-2001 inter-censal period, unless otherwise referenced.

6.1 Dynamics between emigration and internal mobility

As briefly discussed above, there appears to be a disjuncture between studies on international and internal migration from the point of view of those who produce them, as well as topics and issues researched. This is not new and is not specific to the Albanian case (for more on these links see Skeldon 2006). In recent years, however, there is a growing realisation of the importance of linking internal and international migration issues, in order to study migrants' lives in a more complete setting. Certainly in the Albanian case, both movements should be considered as two related elements of a larger picture (Figure 3).

The links between the two migrations in the Albanian context have been discussed only by a handful of scholars so far. King *et al.* (2003) for instance give some descriptive details of North Albanian migrant households combining strategies of internal and international migration. King and Vullnetari (2003) pay attention to both types of migrations, their links, as well as their impact on Albania's communities left behind. King (2004; 2005) also documents and maps out some aspects of internal migration, as well as the impact of interrelationships between both migrations on Albania. A series of studies based on the 2001 census and 2002 LSMS data have looked at both types of migrations, recognising the importance of these links for Albania's development generally (Carletto *et al.* 2004), their dynamics in the development of social and family networks in migration (Carletto *et al.* 2005) and their importance in terms of poverty and rural development in Albania (Castaldo *et al.* 2005; Zezza *et al.* 2005; McCarthy *et al.* 2006). Interest in the topic is also developing because of 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.

Regarding the interlocking of international and internal moves, there is evidence of a number of variations on this theme: international followed by internal migration, vice versa, and simultaneous and overlapping migrations by different family members (King *et al.* 2003: 62-71). For many youth in the rural areas, especially in the North, it can be said that the road to Tirana or Shkodër has for a long time passed through Athens' Omonia Square, or by boat across the Adriatic Sea (King *et al.* 2003; King and Vullnetari 2003). International migration has thus been used to finance an internal move 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, as the analysis of internal migration figures in section 5.2 also confirms. 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, but still offering comparative advantage over their previous residence. Thus for instance Albanians from the more remote mountain areas in the North might decide to make the first move to the rural lowlands near the city of Shkodër or to the city itself (Axhemi 2005: 105); 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, migrating from the village to find employment in Tirana might open up possibilities for further migration abroad: perhaps to Italy or North America.

A third sequencing may take place when for instance the earnings from temporary migration to Greece will finance a move of the family to Durrës or Vlorë, which in turn might open up opportunities to emigrate to other more desirable European destinations such as Italy or the UK, or even North America or Australia.

At the same time, individual trajectories may overlap with family and household trajectories: at the same time as their individual family member(s) are moving abroad, many Albanian families from the rural North and South pursue a parallel, internal migratory strategy to secure their long-term future in Albania. At other times, several members of the same family will pursue parallel migration paths abroad in different countries.

This mixing of internal and international mobility in Albania indicates that real-life situations are much more complex than the internal-international dichotomy, and more complex than the simple sequences outlined by Skeldon (2006). 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-it-yourself development in the face of limited opportunities for economic improvement in the home country, and in northern Albania especially (Nicholson 2001). Let us now examine some of these aspects of migration and development more closely.

6.2 Remittances and their economic impact

Remittances are one of the most researched aspects of migration in Albania during the last 17 years. It has been difficult to report accurate figures on remittances, due in large part to the fact that an unquantified sum is sent through informal channels. Reports from the Central Bank of Albania on total annual sums, including those sent through formal channels (banks, Western Union, Money Gram etc.) and informal channels (personally when visiting, or through relatives and friends etc.), indicate that between 1992 and 2003 Albanians remitted between \$200 million and \$800 million annually (de Zwager *et al.* 2005: 21).⁶⁴ According to these estimates, remittances increased during 1992-96, fell by half in 1997, and increased again thereafter, reaching over \$1 billion in 2004. Representing between 10 and 22 percent of the country's GDP, they have exceeded by several times the amount of foreign direct investments (FDI) in the country, as well as the amount of aid

⁶⁴ Korovilas (1999: 105) suggests that these figures are underestimates, proposing instead that the most probable amount of remittances between 1991-96 was at least \$700 million per annum.

received from international institutions (Gammeltoft 2002: 189; Uruçi and Gëdeshi 2003; King 2005: 149; Piperno 2005; Ghosh 2006: 19). In 2004, remittances amounted to more than twice the revenues from exports, confirming that labour is effectively Albania's most important export (de Zwager *et al.* 2005). Thus, the importance of remittances to the Albanian economy cannot be overemphasised.

When we consider the use of these remittances at an individual and household level, there are a number of patterns which show a changing character over the years. The overall consensus is that remittances in the Albanian context have been crucial in the face of economic survival and poverty alleviation (De Soto *et al.* 2002; King 2005).⁶⁵ With regards to their use, remittances are spent first on primary consumption goods (food and clothing); improvement of the quality of dwellings, such as moving the toilet indoors; repairs and replacements of roofs, windows and doors; buying new furniture and key domestic appliances etc. (Gëdeshi *et al.* 2003; King and Vullnetari 2003: 48). Second, remittances are used to secure respectability of the family, by allowing its members to perform traditional rituals such as weddings, baptisms, funerals etc. and participate in a dignified manner in such events organised by relatives and friends (King and Vullnetari 2003). Third, remittances are used to finance the education of young family members, thus ensuring a better future for them. Fourth, remittances are saved, often informally, and intended for use in emergencies, often related to ill-health (Abazi and Mema 2007; Balliu 2007). Some authors point to a difference in behaviour between urban and rural households: whilst the first tend to prioritise education after consumption and house repairs, the latter tend to spend their remittances to reduce debts, to save or invest (Arrehag *et al.* 2005). Remittances may also be used to purchase what are seen as luxury items, such as cars. However, in an ever-changing society, the definition of cars as a luxury is not totally justified, particularly in countries where public transport is rudimentary and often subject to senseless regulations and restrictions. Thus, to be able to access the labour market or other markets, a car becomes an indispensable item, especially in rural areas. Furthermore, this item takes a significant importance as a status symbol when it is recalled that ownership of cars was largely banned under communism.

Typically, after a first phase in which the migrant sends home as much as possible to improve the living conditions of the remaining family unit, the money is then invested in the personal family project of the migrant: building a separate household close to the parents' house. The ambition and the reality of investing in the construction of houses are a result of the difficult housing situation of Albanians at the end of the communist era (Misja 1998). 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 (King and Vullnetari 2003). However, the majority of

⁶⁵ There is however, one piece of research that questions this generalisation. Based on a survey of 1,315 households in the south-eastern district of Korçë and using an asset-based measure of well-being, Arrehag *et al.* (2005) found that there was no significant difference between remittance-receiving and non-receiving households. This study is, however, geographically specific and focuses on one particular aspect of household well-being. Moreover, these findings are contradicted by Castaldo and Reilly (2007), who, based on the 2002 LSMS data and using a model based on household expenditure, argue that remittance-recipient households spend significantly more on durable goods and utilities than do those who do not receive remittances.

these brand new houses have been built in an urban or most often peri-urban area, rather than in the village of origin. Often displaying architectural influences of the countries where the remittances come from, these relatively large German, Italian, Greek, etc. looking houses constitute a mosaic telling the story that the road to Tirana goes through these countries (Dervishi 2001: 38). Remittances are thus the main, if not the only source of finance for an internal move of (part of) the household.

Some remittances have been invested in economic activities (Papapanagos and Sanfey 2001; Kule *et al.* 2002). These include grocery shops, bars, restaurants, tourist hotels, car garages, filling stations, carpenter shops, storage halls for imported goods and retail trade, and some production facilities such as small tile factories etc. Hailed by some as micro-capitalist motors of development (Nicholson 2001; 2004), often these are small concerns, focused on trade and services, usually employing only members of the immediate and sometimes extended family. Investments in the production and manufacturing sector are negligible (Piperno 2005). Some remittances are also invested in farming. Gërmenji and Swinnen (2004), however, found that farming efficiency was lower in remittance-receiving farm households as compared to non-receivers. They indicate that remittances tend to divert resources away from agriculture. This should in fact be interpreted in a much larger context, rather than simply in economic terms. After 40 years of alienation from agriculture, the *déraciné*, as Vehbiu (1998) calls the peasant youth, have very little, if any, interest in agricultural activities (see also Fuga and Dervishi 2002). It is one of the ways to make a living under difficult conditions of unemployment, but not an end in itself.

When discussing remittance uses as outlined above, there are often disagreements between what constitutes 'unproductive' (consumption such as food, clothing, housing, family rituals) and 'productive' (investment in agriculture, industry and services) uses. Nuances of this debate can also be found in the literature on Albanian remittances. However, such clear-cut definitions are simplistic, based on narrow economic perspectives, do not reflect realities in poor countries such as Albania, and ignore the private nature of such transfers (Koc and Onan 2004; Nikas and King 2005; Orozco 2007). As Oberai and Singh (1980: 237-8) suggest, consumption-oriented expenditure 'should not be interpreted as mainly unproductive; in an economy in which levels of living are low, consumption expenditure may often be functional and may induce significant improvements in labour productivity'. Remittances affect the well-being of families by enabling them to improve their diets, their accommodation, dress better and thus constitute a healthier and more productive workforce and population. Furthermore, through remittances there is increased access to better education and health, as well as improved continuation of family rituals and obligations. As King *et al.* (2006) argue, these remittance deployments must be seen as investments in human capital. These aspects can hardly be captured by simple economically-oriented statistics, but are very important for people's lives and social status.

From a macro-level perspective remittances have been conducive to macro-economic stability by enabling management of the huge trade deficit of more than 20 percent of GDP per year (Lundström and Ronnås 2006: 50) through the foreign exchange they provide. In addition, they have contributed to capital formation, although mostly for small and medium enterprises, as was discussed

above (Kule *et al.* 2002; Léon-Ledesma and Piracha 2004). But some argue that they have also appreciated the Lek against foreign currencies, affecting thus the competitiveness of Albanian producers (de Zwager *et al.* 2005).

Having said that, remittances should not be considered as a panacea for (especially the macro-economic) growth and development in Albania. Indeed, some authors have argued that they have impeded macro-economic growth (Tendjoukian 2004), whilst others sound the alarm that the Albanian economy is too highly dependent on remittances (de Zwager *et al.* 2005). Their sustainability is dependent on many factors, including migrants' age, legal status, marital status, position in the labour market, country of destination and years of emigration. Piperno (2005) for instance shows that Albanian migrants in Italy are sending home relatively large amounts of money, more so after several years of establishing themselves there, as compared to the previous years of emigration. In the case of Greece, Hatziprokopiou (2006: 208-9) also found that almost half of his respondents in Thessaloniki remitted regularly to their relatives in Albania. However, in his sample, the length of stay in Greece only slightly affected remitting behaviour. What was more significant was the higher tendency to remit amongst those who had a bank account in Greece, which perhaps reflects their immigration status and more secure position in the host society. But, as migrants regularise themselves in their host countries, they are able to bring their immediate families to join them, thus reducing the incentives to remit (most remittances are sent to wife, children, parents, siblings, relatives and friends in that order). Albanian migration is increasingly regularising and maturing, with higher levels of family reunion, as discussed earlier. There is thus reason to suspect that remittances will decrease in the future. In the absence of overarching and well-planned strategies, the sustainability of such 'remittance economies' (Skeldon 2006) cannot last long. Nikas and King (2005) point out that a sudden decline in remittances due to economic downturn in Greece as the main destination country for Albanian migrants, may have devastating effects for the Albanian economy. Thus a more active role should be played on the part of policy-makers in harnessing remittances to promote development (Ammassari and Black 2001), whilst recognising their nature as private transfers. This would fundamentally revolve around improving the macro-economic environment within which migration occurs (Black *et al.* 2007). Two main poles need attention in this context: the socio-economic ('end of political cliquism and general extension of social trust among the population') and the infrastructural (roads, utilities, telecommunications, enforcement of the rule of law) environment (Nikas and King 2005: 257). This is also closely related with the recommendation that governments should shoulder their responsibilities for socio-economic growth, rather than burden migrants with the task of substituting these services.

Much less researched and thus less understood is how internal remittances affect individuals' well-being and Albania's development. Castaldo and Reilly (2007), who use 2002 LSMS data, find that the impact of internal remittances on household expenditure is almost negligent. However, they also point to the low number of households in the sample receiving such remittances. In addition, they suggest that internal migrants might not be employed in well-paid jobs. Whilst this is not necessarily the case, it should also be remembered that internal migration displays a more permanent and family-like character (INSTAT 2004a; Cila 2006),

which would influence remittance-sending behaviour. This is an area that has so far lacked adequate attention in research and policy-making circles alike.

Besides remittances in monetary terms, Albanian migrants also remit in-kind. The latter was more common in the early years of migration, when not only clothing, but also furniture and key domestic appliances would be brought to Albania, primarily from Greece, but also Italy. The ratio of monetary to in-kind remittances was almost equal in the early 1990s, and gradually evolved in favour of financial remittances to a 3:1 ratio (Misja 1998). De Zwager *et al.* (2005: 21) estimate in-kind remittances at the level of one sixth of monetary transfers.

A third type of remittances are what Levitt (1998: 926) calls social remittances: 'the ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-country communities'. More on this in the next sub-section of this paper.

Although remittances have been probably the most investigated aspect of Albanian migration, their *gendering* has so far received very limited attention. A rare exception is the work of King *et al.* (2006), based on data from their study on Albanian migrants in the UK and their families in north and central Albania. Analysing gender dynamics of migration and decision-making about sending, receiving and using remittances, their findings reveal some interesting points. The most important conclusion is that contrary to the general belief that migration is usually emancipatory for women, in this particular Albanian context traditional gender roles are reinforced during the migratory project, including with regards to remittances. Thus, most remittances are sent to Albania by the male partner of the migrant family to the male head of the household left behind. The migrant female partner generally does not send remittances to her family. According to the virilocal Albanian tradition, once married she becomes part of the husband's household. Her income is thus part of *his* family's income, and is pooled under the husband's management, to be sent to *his* family. However, some cash remittances may be sent to the wife's own parents; these are largely regarded as presents. Furthermore, the authors suggest that some 'secret' remitting takes place from women to their parental household. On the receiving end, it is again men who most often receive and administer these remittances. Overall, the authors conclude that the '*gendered geography of power*' is enhanced during migration through the economic impact of remittances (emphasis in the original). However, considering that most of the interviewees originated from the North, where patriarchal norms and traditions have historically been stronger than in other parts of the country, and slower to change, it would be interesting to compare the situation for migrants and their households originating from the South. A recent quantitative study on remittances in the Vlorë region, although not providing a gendered analysis of remittances as such, throws some light on this issue. According to the findings from this survey, a male was the head for more than three-quarters (76 percent) of households. Although it is not very clear from the data provided, it appears that the household head is also the principle recipient of remittances. Similarly, for almost 80 percent of households the principle sender was a male, either the son (60 percent) or the father (18 percent). In contrast mothers were senders in only one percent and daughters in eight percent of the cases. Not much generational change seems to have taken place, in that it was the remittance recipient who decided

about their use in almost three-quarters (72 percent) of cases, whereas the sender did so in only about 20 percent of cases (Balliu 2007).

A less mentioned aspect of cross-border transfers is the issue of such transfers flowing in the opposite direction, i.e. 'reverse remittances' from the household in Albania to the migrant abroad. There is abundant evidence for such in-kind transfers, often made up of home-produced food and clothing. These are sent as a token of love and affection between family members, and as a reminder of home. There is less evidence of monetary transfer in this direction, although this does exist. Anecdotal information would suggest that such transfers are primarily towards students who study abroad from parents in Albania who are relatively affluent. Sometimes, these transfers are sent to labour migrants to plug temporary income gaps during the times they are unsuccessful in finding jobs in the host country.

6.3 Demography, gender and generations

After remittances, demography is probably the next most important aspect of the impact of emigration in Albania. Internal and international migration have changed the face of rural and urban Albania in the last 17 years. The effects have been *population loss* for certain areas and *population accumulation* for others. According to the 2001 census, these changes varied extremely by region, 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. These percentages refer to population change over the 1989-2001 inter-censal period (INSTAT 2002: 31-2). Districts 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 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. Rural depopulation in some southern districts has been intense, especially from the ethnic-Greek areas. In some cases, intense out-migration, abandoned dwellings and land etc. have been replaced and re-occupied by migrants from northern Albania, where poverty levels are higher.

Population density is another indicator which 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-communist period. Migration, both external and internal, has reinforced and sharpened the existing geographical contrast in Albanian population density, above all because of migration to Tirana and other main urban centres. Since around the 1930s, the majority of the Albanian population has been 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. By contrast, the mountainous districts which occupy the northern and southern extremities of the country have been sparsely populated, with less than 70 inhabitants per square kilometre. The only exception was the Korçë and Bilisht area, which even by the 1960s displayed significant population densities at levels above 500 metres (Sjöberg 1992a: 62). The most thinly populated

districts are on the borders with neighbouring countries. In the last 17 years, the sparsely populated rural upland districts, especially in the far north-east and in the south, have been 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 a more worrying demographic feature is *the age and gender selectivity of the population loss*. In terms of age, the main effect of migration has been the absence of young populations, especially of working age, and the acceleration of the ageing of the Albanian population left behind: 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 and over rose from 5.3 to 7.5 percent. According to a recent World Bank study, the share of the latter group will further increase in the next 20 years to reach 13.5 percent of the total population by 2025 (World Bank 2007: 7). 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. This selectivity is also observed for internal migration. The younger population is concentrated in the main cities and along the coastal strip. On the other hand, the ageing of population is notably higher in the South – as high as 30–36 percent in some areas of Delvinë and Sarandë districts – which reflects a combination of population loss from out-migration (internal and external) on the one hand, and historically lower birth rates and greater longevity on the other (Vlora Regional Council 2005: 23–24; King and Vullnetari 2006).

In terms of gender, the 2001 census data reflect emigration effects in the marked loss of males in the age-band 15–35; for females the loss is both less marked and more narrowly confined in age terms (18–32). In recent years, due primarily to family reunification, many more women have emigrated, as was shown by the census figures of Albanian immigrants in Greece and Italy, where women constituted around 40 percent in each case in 2001.

The combined effects of such *age- and gender-selective* migration, related much less to internal migration and much more to the process of international migration, brings forth two key social problems: family separations, and the abandonment of older people and ‘care drain’ (King and Vullnetari 2006; Vullnetari and King 2008). Albanian custom obliges the youngest son (and his wife) to take care of his parents in their old age – indeed the youngest son is referred to in Albanian parlance as ‘the son of old age’. But profound post-communist transformations and emigration are breaking down this tradition. 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). Remittances may cushion the situation to a certain extent, but in other, non-material respects older people have been left to fend for themselves in an economic and social environment stripped of any meaningful welfare structures. Cross-generational rupture of hitherto tight family structures is considered by these older people as emotionally painful because of the impossibility of enjoying mutual benefits of care sustained by geographical proximity. Profoundly upsetting is the denial of the practice of grandparenting, seen as their very *raison d’être* by the older generation. Strategies that families use to address such situations include transnational cross-generational care, but also the phenomenon of ‘migrating grannies’ – older grandparents, most often women,

who follow their sons and (less often) daughters abroad to look after grandchildren so both parents can work (see King and Vullnetari 2006).

Naturally, the question arises as to the future of emigration in terms of demography in the long term. An indication of this can be found in the annual birth statistics, which show a rapid decline since 1990.⁶⁶ Albanian population growth was at 2–3 percent per year throughout the period 1950–90. Emigration has abruptly halted this growth as shown by the 2001 census figures. During 1989–2001 the population fell by 113,000 (–0.4 percent per year), due to the massive net emigration. The population pyramid for 1989–2001 indicates a low birth cohort at 0–5 years old. These ‘missing births’ of 0–5 year-olds are partly accounted for by declining fertility and partly by the ‘missing parents’ taken out by emigration. This means that the pressure for emigration will decline in the long term. However, the continuing high number of annual births into the mid-1990s indicates a continuing supply of potential young emigrants for the next 10–20 years (King 2003).

6.4 Combined socio-economic and cultural impact

The combined impact of internal and international migration can also be noted in terms of the socio-economic disparities in the country (Fuga 2004). Strong regional disparities for instance can be observed in terms of poverty and its links with these two types of migration. Zezza *et al.* (2005) show that internal migrants originate predominantly from traditionally poor areas, such as the north and the north-east of the country, whereas international migrants originate from the better-off districts in the south and along the coast. This might reflect the cost of migration (lower internally and higher for international migration), but it can also be explained by the desperately poor conditions and the lack of future prospects that have prevailed in mainly northern areas for decades. As Cila (2006) shows, these migrants’ motivation for migration (internally) is not simply to find work in cities such as Tirana, but above all to seek a better future for their children. The most affluent areas of Tirana-Durrës and the coast are the main destinations for internal migrants, as we have seen earlier. In the Albanian context, this internal migration is quite often ‘fuelled’ by remittances from emigration, but might also be intended and can serve as a springboard for further emigration to better destinations.

The socio-economic disparities within the country reflect closely those which emerged at the beginning of the last century and were established more firmly during the communist years. Thus, the coastal area, particularly around the Tirana-Durrës core, stands in stark contrast to the northern and north-eastern

⁶⁶ 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 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.

region – and some mountainous central areas – in terms of poverty headcount, unemployment, Human Development Index, access to infrastructure, social and health care, educational and other opportunities (INSTAT 2004c). This polarisation continues unabated, in the vacuum of far-sighted strategic leadership amongst Albania's political class during the last 17 years. Just as the gap between urban and rural areas was never really closed during the communist years, the risk of that and other forms of polarisation continuing to increase, seems very high.

The Tirana-Durrës core of the country's development can be divided into two sub-areas: the Tirana–Durrës axis, along which most of the industrial and commercial activities are concentrated; and the peri-urban spaces outside around these two cities, where tens of thousands of migrants have moved since the first post-communist years. 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. In addition, the state administration, presence of foreign diplomats and donor organisations, service activities, tourism, but most of all the construction industry here, offer the most buoyant employment opportunities in Albania. In the power vacuum created by the withdrawal of the state in the post-communist period, the closure and abandonment of large state-managed industrial or agricultural complexes on the fringes of these two urban centres after 1991 gave many families the possibility to relocate there from impoverished areas such as northern Albania. The uncertain legal or ownership status of such abandoned land⁶⁷ enabled the proliferation of squatter settlements, some of them on dangerously toxic former industrial land. Two of the most important and most written about are Bathore in peri-urban Tirana and Këneta in peri-urban Durrës. Bathore, built entirely informally after 1990 from internal migrants originating primarily from Kukës, Dibër, Tropojë and Pukë, has a population of around 25,500 and has come to exemplify all informal settlement developments in post-1990 Albania (Cila 2006: 4). These peri-urban squatter settlements are home to some of the poorest and most socially disadvantaged groups in the country. Zezza *et al.* (2005: 190) talk about a 'relocation of poverty' from, principally, impoverished rural mountainous areas, into more affluent urban areas. This is confirmed by Bërxfholi *et al.* (2005: 88-9) in their in-depth study of the labour market in Albania. Their findings suggest that between 2001 (census year) and 2004 (their study), underemployment rates in agriculture in traditionally poor areas such as Tropojë and Kukës had fallen from 48 and 67 percent respectively, to less than 10 percent. On the other hand, the rates for Tirana district – the highest in the country – were more than 50 percent by 2004, which the authors attribute primarily to immigration.

The process of wild urbanisation in Tirana is illustrative for other urban areas. Dervishi's (2001) title of one of his papers illustrates some of these issues well: 'Urban life of rural migrants or urban ruralisation?'. According to him, on the one hand the centre of Tirana has become overurbanised due to the high density of new blocks of flats and apartments; the loss of green spaces and open areas to other non-productive activities; high air, visual and noise pollution; and roads

⁶⁷ Unlike the agricultural cooperatives, these were excluded from the laws and subsequent decrees of the 1990s on land distribution.

constantly blocked by traffic jams.⁶⁸ Ever-narrowing pavements are crowded with people whilst construction and destruction go on every day. On the other hand, the capital is surrounded by a 'ring' of rural in-migrants who although physically present in the city, mentally and culturally have not moved far from their rural areas of origin (Dervishi 2001: 39). Peri-urban areas of Tirana resemble thus a gigantic village. The chaotic and large-scale rural-urban migration has put services in urban destination areas under great strain: there is a dire lack of (adequate) roads, power, water and sewage systems; insufficient provision of health and education services; not to mention entertainment and leisure activities (Dervishi 2001; Heller *et al.* 2005; Lulo 2005). Some service provision projects, especially in Bathore, have been undertaken with the support of international organisations and especially the World Bank, by trying to include the inhabitants in a participatory approach (Cila 2006; Zonzini 2005). However, the 'melting pot' of cultures and peoples that some authors would like to ascribe to the interaction of migrants and non-migrants in the cities is yet to materialise. Far from it, a spatial and social segregation has taken place: the pre-1990 Tirana residents, who hold the most important jobs in administration, business, and other key areas, and who live in the affluent quarters of the city, complain of the 'suffocation' caused by this large-scale in-migration. Yet, it is this 'army' of primarily manual and semi-skilled workers, living in the disadvantaged peri-urban areas, who are working in their homes and businesses and providing them with services every day.

Similar negative socio-economic, educational, urban and environmental effects of in-migration emerge from observations and discussions of the urbanisation of other cities such as Gjirokastrë (Kosta 2005: 117), Korçë, Shkodër, etc. The sense of chaos and 'invasion' and total lack of any positive contributions portrayed by most researchers when discussing internal migration in Albania, begs one to draw parallels to the ways Albanian emigrants have been perceived abroad. However, more positive findings can be found in a few studies. Zonzini (2005: 53) for instance argues that internal migrants, including those in peri-urban areas such as Bathore in Tirana, 'Mark Lule' in Shkodër or 'Kushtrim' in Vlorë, in fact act as 'resources of integration' within the country. Cila's (2006) findings from her study of 60 households who had migrated from the northern districts to Bathore suggest that, in spite of the problems encountered, migrants' lives had improved considerably after their migration. The mixture of experiences is also observed amongst female migrants. For instance, some of those moving with their families, as in the case of internal migration from the North, are affected adversely by a combination of a conservative mentality and financial difficulties, resulting in diminished access to education (Cila 2006: 64). Yet Tirana presents greater opportunities for other young women who 'find themselves through migration' in 'Albania's America'. This paradoxical mix is a strong typifying aspect of Tirana and its surroundings, and of Albania's constantly changing face.

⁶⁸ By the mid-2000s, around 70,000 vehicles were registered in Tirana, representing almost 30 percent of the total number for Albania. The number almost doubled in 5 years (1998-2003). In addition, an estimated 10 percent of the vehicles registered in the country travel to Tirana (Tirana Regional Council 2005: 84).

7. Return

This section discusses some aspects of the return of Albanian migrants, and focuses primarily on return from abroad during the post-1990 period. However, return during communist times and return of internal migrants between 1990-2007 are briefly touched upon. The account then deals in more detail with return of international migrations during this latter time, and concludes with some remarks about the future of this aspect of migration.

7.1 Return during communism

When reading the title of this section, the question must surely come to the reader's mind: if emigration was punished so severely, how was any return possible? The Albanian diaspora abroad was somewhat divided during the communist regime between those who opposed it, and those who were neutral or to some extent sympathetic to it. From within Albania, the diaspora was also regarded in this dual light: those who were enemies of the state, primarily political opponents and others who fled Albania after 1945 on the one hand; and purely 'economic' migrants who had emigrated before this time but were seen to have kept at least a neutral position vis-à-vis the Albanian communist authorities. What is therefore noted in this section is the return, largely in the 1960s, of these 'economic' emigrants from countries such as Australia and the USA. Most of them were in retirement age, but still single because they either never married, or left their families behind when they emigrated. Their numbers are probably not very significant, but one of the reasons the Albanian government is thought to have accepted them back was that they came home with some foreign currency, their savings, which they could spend in Albania.

7.2 Internal migrants return home

After the fall of the communist regime a significant number of those who had moved internally for the various reasons mentioned towards the end of sub-section 3.1 returned to their areas of origin. This was most likely the case when they had been appointed in small urban areas, particularly away from the coastal cities. Internally exiled people also moved back to their areas of origin, but often they had nothing left there as they had been expropriated soon after their exile. They in turn followed their immediate relatives elsewhere in the country.

7.3 Return in 1990-2007 and beyond

Limited knowledge also exists on return emigrants from abroad, although research on the topic is increasing. Very little is known in terms of numbers, trends and patterns as well as profiles of returnees and their impact on Albania. In the early 1990s most Albanian migrants abroad, particularly in Greece and Italy, were undocumented. As such, they were prone to repatriation, and as mentioned earlier,

they were forcibly returned to Albania in their thousands. Once in Albania, many would again walk over to Greece or take the boat to Italy in a matter of days. Others simply returned for several months at a time, as much of the migration to Greece was temporary in nature. This continued on a large scale until the first regularisation programmes in the late 1990s in these two countries. By the mid-1990s, there were signs of a trickle of return of those who had been part of the first wave of departure to Greece and Italy, especially those who had accumulated some capital and wanted to start a new life in Albania. As most Albanians had emigrated principally to achieve this aim, rather than settle abroad permanently, this was expected. However, this return and its effects were cancelled out with the fall of the pyramid schemes in 1997 and returnees were driven abroad, together with new emigrants, by the ensuing chaos (King and Vullnetari 2003: 49). After that, return took a negative connotation and was associated with failure. Parallel to this, the political and economic instability and backwardness of the country discouraged any large-scale return (Barjaba and King 2005: 19). In the years that followed, most returnees were repatriated migrants. An estimated 30,000 Albanians who failed to regularise their status in their host countries are said to have been repatriated in this way in 2004 alone (de Zwager *et al.* 2005: 57). But, from anecdotal evidence, some of those go back to their host countries within a matter of days or weeks, so there might be multiple counting in these numbers. An insignificant number of irregular emigrants who see no hope of regularisation – 300 between 2000-04, primarily from Western Europe and the USA – have made use of the Voluntary Assisted Return Programme (VARP) administered by the International Organisation for Migration (de Zwager *et al.* 2005: 58). The EU countries are hoping to increase the numbers of such irregular migrant returnees in the future, including Third Country Nationals (TCN), after Albania was pressed to sign a Readmission Agreement (RA) with the EU *en bloc*.⁶⁹ There are already fears that the lack of capacity for implementation and indeed the very terms of this RA might turn Albania into a ‘readmission trap’ or a ‘revolving door’ for TCNs (Long and Celebic 2006: 30).

In recent years, however, as political and economic stability have improved, there are signs of increasing voluntary return, that is to say emigrants who want to build their future in Albania; but this is still fairly embryonic (King and Vullnetari 2003). Although some authors (Labrianidis and Hatziprokopiou 2005) argue that Albanian return from Greece is a reality that needs further documentation and analysis, there is still a low propensity for voluntary return of emigrants from countries such as Italy or the UK (King and Mai 2002; King *et al.* 2003; Piperno 2005: 129). This difference might be related to the nature of emigration to Greece, where emigrants go for short periods of time to ‘top up their cash requirements’, considering Greece as a ‘bank cash-machine’ in King’s (2005: 152) words. A recent study by de Zwager *et al.* (2005), surveying a number of emigrants in Greece, Italy

⁶⁹ Albania is one of the few countries, and the first one in Europe, to have signed a RA with the European Union *en bloc*, which includes return of Third Country Nationals who have transited through Albania to the EU. Signing such a RA was a pre-requisite for signing the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), according to Article 80 of the SAA draft agreement. The RA was ratified by the EU parliament in September 2005, although the SAA has so far only been signed by a limited number of EU country parliaments. The provisions for the Albanian nationals within this RA came into force on 1 May 2006, whereas those for third country nationals will do so in 2008. For more details see IOM (2006a; 2006b).

and the UK, concluded that there is high return potential amongst long-term migrants from these countries, particularly from Greece and Italy, which is expected to take place over the coming 5-10 years. This return will be accompanied by large migrant transfers, i.e. the savings that these migrants will bring with them to Albania and invest there. However, the findings are largely based on *intention* to return rather than any actual return. Many migration scholars have noted the wide gap between the intention or wish of emigrants to return and actual return (see Boyle *et al.* 1998 for a review of this debate). It will be interesting to see whether Albanian migration will be an exception to the rule.

Large-scale family-based return migration seems unlikely for two major reasons: because migrants, and especially their children, have successfully settled in their host countries; and because of Albania's continuing social and economic problems. In the 1990s, lack of security, political instability and lack of general and business infrastructure were perceived as the most important factors standing in the way of a long-term return (King and Vullnetari 2003). After 2000, the country's relative political stability and increased security have not been accompanied by a significant improvement in the infrastructure: Albania still suffers from serious water and power shortages which has crippled businesses and caused a number of them to go bankrupt. These infrastructural shortcomings are much greater than in other neighbouring countries and low-middle-income countries where Albania is often categorised (Lundström and Ronnäs 2006). At the same time, the second generation of emigrants, those born abroad or who went there as very young children, are integrating abroad in education and society; they have very little connection to Albania, and often do not even speak the language. Their return to Albania would mean another migration, except this time to a much poorer country. Besides economic reasons, a very strong motive for migration for many migrants has been the future of their children, which for at least the next 10 years will be better in these host countries. Under such circumstances, return, and especially of the young and active, looks remote. A more realistic picture would be to contemplate return of retired migrants, who might have some capital, but are most likely to save it, in order to top up the meagre pensions they would receive in Albania.

In the Albanian context, apart from the *demographics* of return migrants, which might indicate the financial and other capital they are likely to bring with them, equally important is also the *place* of return, which as argued earlier is rarely the village community of departure. A return to the harsh mountains of northern, southern, or interior Albania is seen as obviously problematic, since the developmental potential of these regions remains limited; resettlement in the more urbanised lowland of central Albania may be more attractive. Further population pressures on the Tirana-Durrës conurbation can be expected if regional development continues with the same lack of planning as at present.

8. Transnationalism, diaspora and the future

There is growing realisation amongst policy-makers, donor agencies, development specialists and the wider informed public that the Albanian diaspora is becoming

increasingly important for the growth and the socio-economic development of the country. The large potential that remittances hold is the most acknowledged element of the diaspora's contribution. This can be seen in the extensive body of research produced on this subject as compared to other aspects of migration, as discussed earlier, but also in the increasing number of government initiatives supported by international donor organisations, especially IOM and ILO. The Draft National Action Plan on Remittances (2007) and other publications (e.g. de Zwager *et al.* 2005; Abazi and Mema 2007; Balliu 2007) are part of this remittance-led 'development mantra' (Kapur 2004). Much less researched and acknowledged have been 'social remittances' (Levitt 1998).

The flows of ideas, behaviours, practices etc. which constitute social remittances are key to understanding migrants as agents of social and political change, as well as the ways in which migration effects change for those left behind (Nyberg Sørensen 2005); indeed, social remittances might even be more important than financial transfers with regard to long-term effects (Kapur 2004).

In the Albanian context emigrants are connected to their origin country and act as transmitters of knowledge, ideas and practices through a number of ways. In other words transnational practices are increasing and there is an emergent transnational social space, especially encompassing Greece and Italy (Chiodi and Devole 2005; Maroukis 2005a; 2005b). First, migrants follow events in Albania through ethnic mass media on satellite TV, newspapers etc. Secondly, they share knowledge and ideas with their family members and friends in Albania through videos, telephones, letters, the internet etc. Third, they visit Albania either on holiday or for special family occasions. Those living closer to the border may do this more frequently. There are also emerging practices of trade encouraged by migrants' links to business partners in the countries where they emigrated. These ideas and practices that migrants bring with them, or transmit through various channels of communication, impact on gender and generational roles, ethnic identity, class and social status, as well as on demography, political and social participation and human rights in Albania. As a result of living abroad, migrants have developed certain expectations of what is acceptable and what is not, particularly regarding the role of governments, standards of services etc. Those who live in host countries where political democracies are established transmit the kind of politics they are in contact with, thus encouraging those at home to demand higher standards of governance. In recent years emigrant Albanians have been personally involved in the political life of the country, not only by influencing the voting preference of their family members who are still living in Albania, but also by casting votes themselves. Since it is not yet possible for Albanians to vote abroad, or by post, or by proxy, they travel to Albania for this specific purpose. One of the most vivid examples of this practice was apparent in the local elections held on 18 February 2007, when thousands of emigrants travelled to Albania from Greece specifically for the purpose of voting. The numbers were higher than at any other time, reflecting their personal involvement in the country's politics, their political maturity through their migration experience abroad and also the increased regularisation rate in Greece.

Albanian migrants' contribution to Albania's development need not be conditioned on return. Contribution through transnational activities should be considered as an alternative which is potentially more beneficial, less costly for all

involved and stimulates development in the long term. As was shown in the case of migrants living in the border areas between Albania and Greece, transnational activities that stimulate development crucially rest upon the ability to be able to travel back and forth between the countries. Forms of regular migration status such as permanent residence in host country or dual citizenship could encourage such transnational practices further. Some exploratory research indicates that the highly educated migrants, especially, are willing to undertake such transnational activities if only given the chance (Orgocka 2005). It is this interlinked avenue of migration, diaspora and development that stakeholders need to pursue, rather than focusing on return alone.

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