

meaning), unwanted land uses areas (waste, polluting industry, military) and inner periphery rural areas (particular specifics deficient areas).

522 local level municipalities were statistically analysed in accordance with the typology, one municipality could correspond more than one type of region in relations with urban/rural connectivity. The research provided evidence that multiplicity and variety of urban-rural interactions or the possession of more than one type of urban/rural connectivity is associated with higher economic performance at local municipality level (Küle et al. 2009).

Group interviews revealed many urban-rural relations not measured by national statistics or monitored by current policy reviews, like informal recreation management and inter-municipal agreements on shared service provisions. In soft issues (social, culture, education) municipalities tended to cooperate with those similar in terms of size and interests, often ignoring centre-periphery and proximity aspects. Conversely, in hard issues municipalities are restricted to cooperation with larger adjacent urban areas because of infrastructure and geographical considerations.

Interviewed municipalities expressed a desire for regional/national policy interventions and stimuli to coordinate rural-urban aspects not currently covered by policy recommendations. These particularly included in education, health provision, entrepreneurship and countryside resources (recreation, food) use by non-local population. There was a

desire for more information on best practice provision and incentives to population to increase the multiplicity of rural activities.

It was agreed that urban-rural dimension was only an additional aspect to basic services provision in rural areas. There was thus a need for policy instruments promoting urban-rural governance that can help in the provision of services in these remoter rural areas, drawing on governance arrangements (inner-municipal, inter-municipal, regional, sectoral and cross-sectoral) suitable to the peculiarities of the urban-rural pattern.

Wider implications for rural planning

The Latvian effort to clarify regions according to their urban/rural connectivity has at least one lesson for the recent European debate on territorial cohesion introduced by the Green Paper (CEC 2008) that covers urban and rural aspects. It is important to take account of the fact that not only urban-rural partnerships are a part of integrated local development but rural-urban relations have also implications at all spatial levels.

There is an important role for national, regional and municipal governments and governance networks to coordinate rural-urban aspects to avoid informality and inequalities. A serious application of an approach building on the connectivity rather than the differences of urban and rural areas can help to better frame policy interventions across traditional sectoral divisions, and hence provide promising future policy options.

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Coping with Urbanity

Where migration is a mass phenomenon, it seems sensible to turn to the statistics to give you the facts and figures of the situation. **Erka Çaro** argues that to understand, shape and direct the contribution of migrants to Albania's urbanisation, it is better to go beyond the facts and figures to get to the feelings of the migrants.

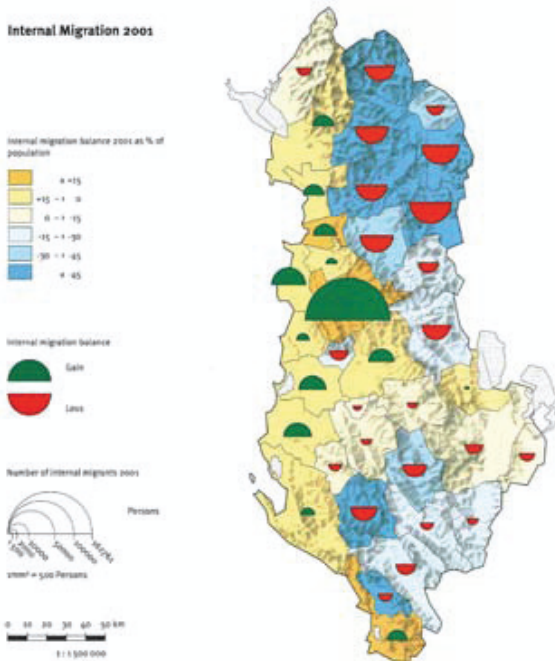
Introduction

Internal migration is one of the most dynamic phenomena of last decades in post-communist Albania and has shaped the socio-economic and demographic situation of the country (UNDP 2002). Since the early 1990s over 400,000 people, out of 3.1m, are estimated to have migrated within the country (INSTAT 2004; World Bank 2007). Between 1989 and 2001,

the share of urban population increased from 35% to 42% (World Bank 2007). The internal migration flows show a distinctive regional trajectory. People are moving from rural areas of the North-Eastern districts towards urban areas in the Central Region of the country (Figure 1).

Since the 1990s, the North-Eastern region has continuously been excluded from the development policies of the State.

Figure 1. Internal migration for the period 1990-2001



Source: Berxholi et al. 2003

The region has suffered the most from poverty and has been an extreme case in terms of unemployment, scarce physical and social infrastructure, and inferior levels of education which lowered overall life quality. Regional disparities have pushed people to move from the deprived North towards more prosperous central areas such as Tirana and its surroundings. Tirana accounts for around 75% of Albania's total urban population (World Bank 2007). The rapid population growth in Tirana has expanded its outskirts, creating a new rural-urban reality.

This new form of rural-urban admixture differs from the traditional concepts of urban and rural, with areas mostly inhabited by rural migrants, characterized by informal and squatter settlements, including the case of Kamza, an emerging urban reality on the outskirts of Tirana, now the largest informal area nationally. Informal migration has raised tensions among the migrants, the state and the owners; initially, the government did nothing to accommodate the influx of rural migrants. But the rapid spread of informal settlements brought burgeoning conflicts especially between migrants and land owners. When the Albanian government decided to relocate migrants to their original villages, a new form of conflict broke out between migrants and the police (Figure 2).

Context: Kamza an emerging city

The municipality of Kamza (MoK), once a State-owned farm, is continuously transforming into non-farming employment and over populated land, and is the biggest of Albania's post-communist informal settlements (MoK 2007; Aliaj et al. 2003). In the early 1990s Kamza was an agricultural farm of only 6,000 inhabitants (MoK 2002). Following the freedom of movement and land reform in Albania in the early 1990s, Kamza's population grew tenfold by 2002 to 60,000, then to an estimated 100,000 inhabitants in 2009 (Aliaj 2002; MoK 2002, 2008). Kamza's dynamic urbanisation is unlike normal urbanisation trends seen in other countries (Hall 1998, Çabiri et al. 2000). Kamza represents a dynamic case of chaotic

Figure 2. Confrontations among migrants and the police



Source: Armando Babani 1995

urbanisation, with mushrooming informal settlements, lacking infrastructure and service access.

The emphasis of this article is on hearing the voice of rural migrants and their livelihoods in a suburban area. Migrants have often been blamed in the Albanian media as 'suffocators' of the city life (INSTAT 2004), or 'ruralising' the capital. Their voice is almost absent from the decades-old Albanian migration literature, even though migration has been the centre of scientific arguments for decades. To understand the consequences of massive internal migration for the suburban community of Kamza, to explore the ways rural-to-urban migrants adjust in this sub-urban area and to emphasise the importance of social, economic and physical capitals, I looked at the views of these rural-to-urban migrants. I focus on the migrants' perspective, their feelings and thoughts, and on their housing, as the most essential capital owned by migrant households and a symbol of wellbeing and social status.

Settling process

The start of migration towards Kamza started with the communist regime's 1990 fall. Proximity to the capital, Tirana, cheap land prices (Aliaj 2002), and abundant free space to accommodate were highly attractive in these early days. The typical settling process started with the household head coming from the village to occupy a place in Kamza. As a second step a *Barrak* (makeshift wooden shelter) was built while constructing the house. A household child (usually a daughter) would then arrive to act as care giver. Once one housing floor was completed, the remainder of the family would join, and depending on economic stability, up to three further floors would be built, and familial contacts would arrive in a migration chain. Where early migrants purchase ground, they may subdivide it and sell/give it to the 'trusted' migrants, meaning relatives, neighbors and friend:

"Here everybody has taken the land and did not pay for it. I remember that everything happened at a blink. They [migrants] came with trucks full of stuff... bam bam plugged four lumbers

Figure 3. Informal extensions in 1994 and 2009



Source: John Driscoll et al. 2007; Erka Çaro 2009

in the ground and constructed a barak just in the middle of the space. They were as mushrooms everywhere.” (Sabri, 43)

Legalisation process

Upon arrival the migrants need a number of coping strategies to reduce their vulnerability and deal with difficulties in the first in Kamza, often years of fear and survival. Conflicts over land in these years were numerous, resulting in continuous confrontations and violence between migrants, owners and the State. In 1995, the Albanian government decided to relocate migrants living in informal settlements to their villages and demolish their houses (Aliaj et al 2003). This attempt resulted in confrontations between migrants and the police.

“We have nothing ... we are afraid that we will lose our house, our land ...the blood of our sons and husbands in emigration... only when there are elections they [politicians] comes here, promises us everything... rights on the land and house, that we will have water and electricity...lies...after they go everything is forgotten.” (Naxhia, 52)

Following growing social chaos, the government acknowledged migrants as legal, granting migrants public policy influence through their struggles. Legalisation started in mid-July 2006 with the self-declaration of land and buildings by the migrant households. Legalisation is expected to facilitate the adjustment process of migrants, as some migrants are expected to enjoy a wide range of benefits, including increases of house and land value, eligibility for loans and a functioning real estate market (Cila 2006).

Investing in houses via remittances from abroad

Investing in the house is an important way of increasing one's wellbeing. Remittances are considered one of the

most significant economic capitals which facilitate the adjustment process and construction of social capital, by investing in the most essential asset, the house. Remittances are seen by most Albanians as way of coping with difficult economic conditions (De Soto et al. 2002). In Kamza we found that remittances were used mainly to invest in housing and for everyday expenses. After the migration decision is taken, remittances act as the main source to finance the settling process and the construction of the house:

“We made Kamza; here was empty and endless. Our sons, husbands aboard have sacrificed themselves and sent money to build the houses, to build our life here. We found nothing and now we have everything.” (Female, 47)

Achievements and fears of the Kamza migrant community

Kamza's migrants' lives have changed significantly compared with their original village. Although urban living costs are higher compared to rural areas, household living conditions have improved. There is better access to infrastructure and facilities, there is physical capital in housing, and social and psychological capital such as social networks, work and education. Work and remittances are elements that bring not only economic benefits but also social status and psychological wellbeing. These capitals are perceived as important elements in the adjustment process. Yet the adjustment process is impeded by the never-ending legalisation process. Migrants remained fearful of losing the house and being sent back to the north. These feelings caused continuous community stress, lowering feelings of belonging.

The mainstream's perception of migrants is that Kamza is becoming a stable community. The area is expected to progress and further urbanisation is foreseen through integration to Tirana and investments in the area. The migrant community perceives the adjustment process as a complex phenomenon which goes through various stages of development over time. Many factors act as facilitators or barriers to the adjustment process. The migrants were willing to develop, change and adapt to a different cultural context, yet there is the risk and fear of the assimilation of their own values. Adjustment is not only a matter of duration of time, economic conditions and social networks, but is also a matter of willingness, feeling, individual characteristics, learned behavior and personal values.

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