

The changes of population in Gjirokastra region

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Abstract:

The summer of 1990 marked the ending of the long imposing political isolation of the communist regime and marked the shifting from the planned economy onto the free trade, there was allowed the free circulation of the population, the private sector was legalized and the construction activity was rapidly developed mainly to solve the problem of housing.

During this period, as a result of a complex political, historical, cultural, social, psychological, economical factors etc, has occurred changes in all aspects in the lifestyle of Gjirokastra region, mainly demographic ones, which affected directly the rural development.

The birth rate and immigration, the death rate and emigration, the social, economical, educational, cultural changes etc are the main factors which have influenced in the change of the number of the rural population of the region. The forecast of the population of the region is important for the calculation of the needs in the development of the economy, education, culture, infrastructure, for general estimations, macroeconomic calculations etc. Thus, a decrease of the region's population at an average of 745.2 persons per every year (starting from 2004), will result in 2009 that all the communes will have a population decrease.

Keywords: Natural increase, migrating balance, urbanisation, physiological density, age pyramid.

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Introduction:

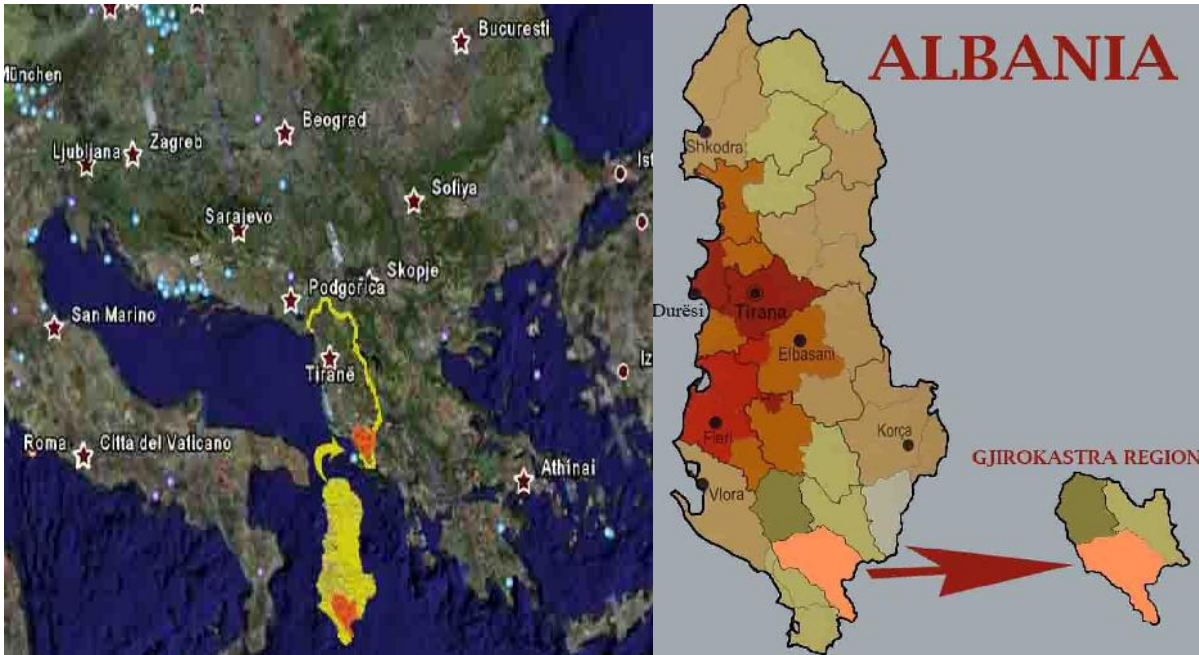
The analysis is carried out in the space and time dynamics on the basis of the comparison among the rural areas of the district of Gjirokastra. For a more accurate presentation of the demo-geographical phenomena, attention has been paid to the graphic and cartographic aspect through which many features of the population such as the territorial distribution, features of the age structure and urbanization have been broken down.

The cartographic presentation has helped in the detailed presentation of the phenomena of the rural population contributing in this way to knowledge of the rural population geography of the district. This paper has as its object the study of the demographic processes in the rural area of the district of Gjirokastra on a demographic and geographic plan. It intends to identify the laws and features of changes in the rural geography and population of the district.

- ***The natural conditions***
 - *The features of the geographic position*

The district of Gjirokastra lies in southeast Albania, in the central part of the Southern Mountainous Region and it is run by the Viosa river and its main branch Drino. It occupies an important position bordering Greece in the south east, with which it is connected by two border points. Kakavija and Tri Urat.

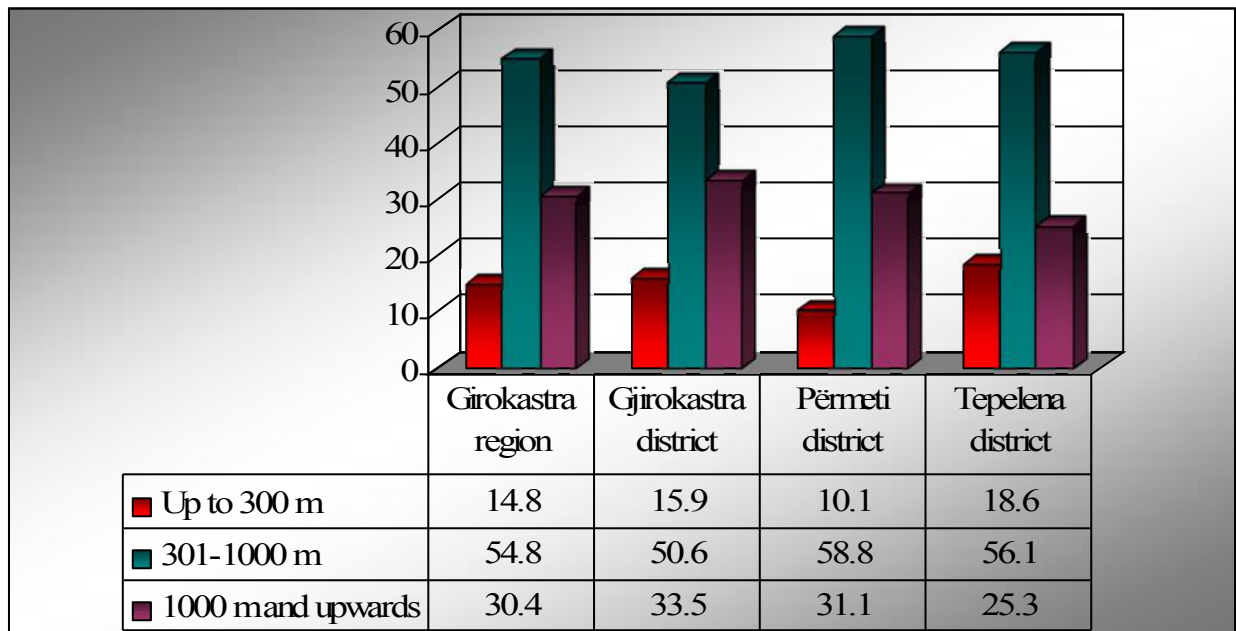
Figure 1: Geographical position of Gjirokastra region (*PhD. A. Sinani*)



- *Features of the relief*

The relief of the district is mainly mountainous and hilly. 54.8% of its territory lies at altitudes of 300 – 1000m, whereas 30.4% lies at altitudes higher than 1000m above sea level. There is large, hypsometric amplitude, the highest point being the Nemercka Mountain (Drita peak 2484.9 m) and the lowest point in Kalivac, where Vjosa River leaves Tepelena at 67m above sea level.

Figure 2: The area structure according to altitude in percentage in Gjirokastra region



- *Climatic features*

The district of Gjirokastra has suitable climatic conditions for rural development, with multifarious Mediterranean climate. The Vjosa valley and its branches enable the penetration of the warm, sea winds through the Kelcyra³³² pass up to Perat.

The district of Gjirokastra receives on average over 2000mm of rainfall per year, which is more than the average amount nationwide (1430mm). As far as the hydrologic and energetic potential is concerned, it comes second to the Alps region. 80.5% of the precipitations are concentrated in the cold half of the year and 19.5% in the warm one.

- *The water resources*

In the district of Gjirokastra there is a relatively dense hydrographic network, with plentiful and qualitative water resources. Within its space there is a river network with a total length of 820.2 km and density from 0.164 km/km² for the river Drino to 2.2 km/km² for the river Vjosa and its branches. The district is rich *in underground water sources, mineral and thermo mineral waters* with huge economic, tourist and environmental values.

³³² Encyclopedia of Tepelena, 2005, p235.

- *The flora and fauna*

The flora is multifarious with 179 kinds of trees and plants of 208 nationwide. Forest plants take up 29.8% of the area of the district (bushes take up 45.6% of the forest fund of the district.) and there are over 120 kinds of aromatic and medicinal plants. The fauna of the district of Gjirokastra contains 13% of the rare species of Albanian.

- *Early population*

The valley of Vjosa has been a cradle of civilization since ancient times when the river used to be called Aoos Aous etc. It was mentioned in the VI-V centuries B.C. when it constituted the axes of the natural roads, along which lay settlements and economic activities³³³. The development of settlements in this valley was favoured by the short distance to the coast (24.6 to 72 km). Due to the geographical position, the upper valley of Vjosa has served as a link for the southeastern Illyrian regions with the Aegean and Adriatic³³⁴ regions. The early population and the various economic activities that took place since ancient times have created invaluable riches in the cultural heritage of this area.

The administrative division started when the district was under the Turkish rule. According to the property register "Registration of the lands of the Sandjak of Albania in 1431-1432"³³⁵ the city of Gjirokastra became the center of the Albanian Sandjak, which was divided in provinces and later on in cities (Gjirokastra, Permeti, and Kelcyra) 90.0% of the population lived in the rural areas of the district.

According to the Turkish registration of the year 1879, the population of the rural areas constituted 86.4% of the population. The new administrative division of the year 1928 and the creation for the first time of the communes in April 1929 affected directly the size and population of the settlements in the district of Gjirokastra. In the first years 47.4% of the emigrants had as destination Greece, 29.2% Turkey, 15.8% America and 7.6% other countries.

Between the two registrations of the years 1923 and 1945, the population of the district was reduced at a yearly rate of 0.43% and the density at -0.2 people per km².

³³³ Lole 2000, p61.

³³⁴ Encyclopedia of Tepelena, 2005, p235.

³³⁵ Berxholi 1987, p9-15.

With the law No. 284, of the date 22 August 1946, People's Republic of Albania was proclaimed and the new administrative division was approved which lasted until July, 1953. The largest local unit of the space was *the prefecture of Gjirokastra*, made up of sub-prefectures, communes and localities. In the year 1976 the People's Socialist Republic of Albania was proclaimed and in the year 1979 the administrative unit of locality was absolved but sub-districts, unified villages, cities and villages was preserved.

On decision of the Ministers' Council, No.269, of the date 25 June, 1992, the reorganization of the territory of Albania was carried out, where the district made up of municipalities and communes constitutes the largest administrative unit. The region of Gjirokastra is made up of 26 communes and 6 municipalities. Its constitution took place on 21.11.2000³³⁶.

- *Historic tendencies of population*

A lot of comparisons have been made and a lot of tendencies have been pointed out according to the results of the 1989 census- the last one of the past regime, and according to the 2001 population and house census. The data taken from the Registry Office of the different district of the prefecture have been elaborated, too.

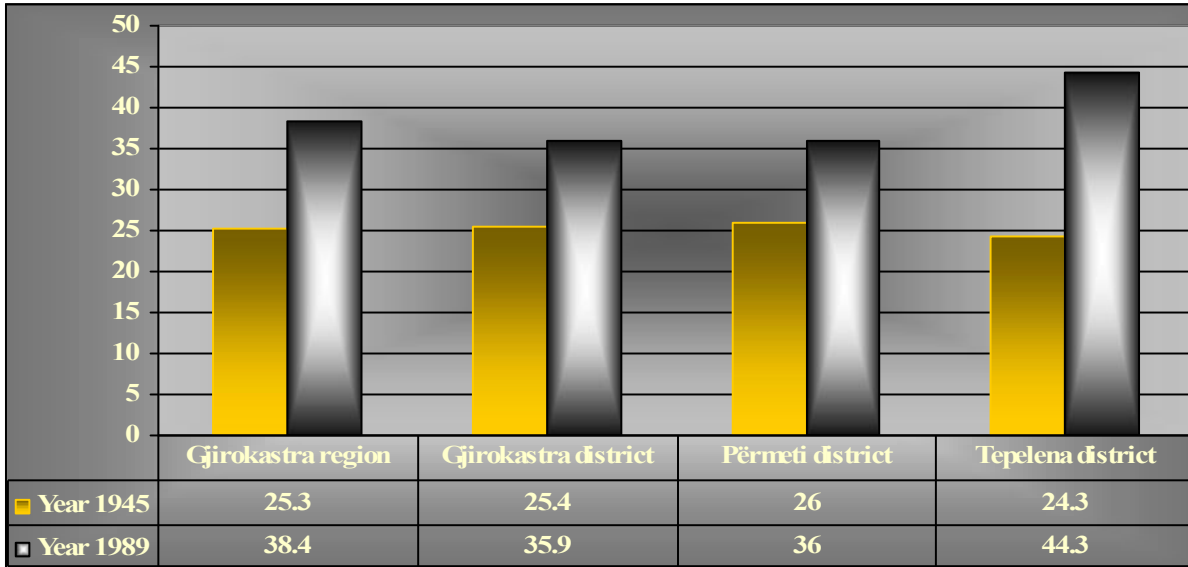
- *The increase and the dynamics of population*

Studying the population helps make an accurate social-economic planning. *During the previous decades* the rural population of Gjirokastra region continuously increased: since the Second World War the yearly average rate of the population increase was 1.0%, making it possible that the population would be increased 1.5 times during the 44 last years (62.1% of this increase came from the natural increase and -37.9% from the negative migration balance). Since 1950 to 1990, the Gjirokastra region population had gone through decades of a rapid increase of the population, although the speed of this movement had been decreased in a progressive way. At the end of 1989, the rural population of Gjirokastra region increased by 52% in comparison to year 1945. A direct result of the rural population growth in the above region was the increase of rural

³³⁶ UNDP. The strategy for the development of the region of Gjirokastra, 2005.

density from 25.3 h/km² in 1945 to 38.4 h/km² in 1989. The density of population was low in the region of Shqeri, Zagori, Pogon, Kurvelesh and Frasher.

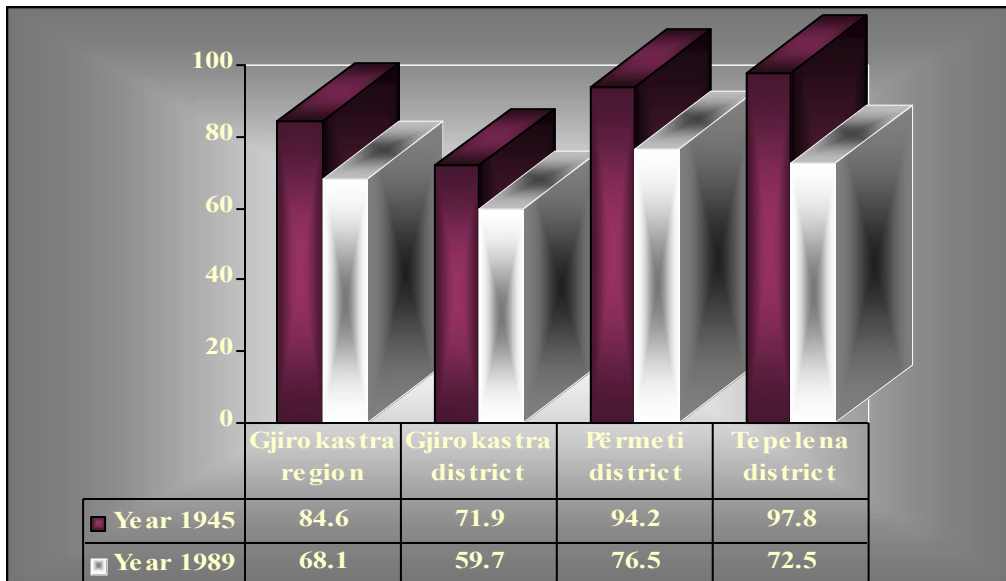
Figure 3: The average density in h/km²



Source: Sinani (2011)

The number of the rural population decreased as a result of the urbanization growth.

Figure 4: The specific growth of rural population in %



Source: Sinani (2011)

According to 1989 census figures, 50.8% of the population lived at the altitude of 301-599m and 27.5% at the altitude of 100-299m. This tendency was reversed during 1989-2001, period in which there was a *negative increase* (-3.6%), which shows an

absolute decrease of the rural population by -37377 and -11343 in habitants respectively during the periods 1989-2001 (according to INSTAT) and 2001-2009 (according to the Registry Office).

Thanks to *this massive shifting* of the population, the number of the inhabitants changed every year. According to INSTAT, during 1989-2001 *the region of Gjirokastra* lost -35.2% of the 1989 rural population. According to the Registry Office figures, during 1989-2004 the greatest population decrease happened in the municipality of the district of Permet (Ballaban -38.4%, Suke -36.0%, Dëshnicë -31.9%, Frasher -22.5%), in the municipalities of the district of Tepelena (Buz -41.5%, Kurvelesh -38.8%, Lopes -37.4%, Luftinjë -22.1%) and in the municipalities of Gjirokastra (Picar -25.2%)³³⁷. The decrease of the rural population increase rate was brought about mainly by the decrease of the birth-rate. During 1989-2004 the number of population decreased at a yearly average rate by 0.6%, with a negative immigration balance of the male element of 54.5% of the total net immigration balance.

During 1989-2004, in the municipalities of the district of Gjirokastra, the number of population increased at an yearly average rate of 0.7%, in the municipalities of the district of Permet it decreased at an yearly average rate of 1.7%, whereas in the municipalities of the district of Tepelena it decreased by 1.4%. 56.1% of the immigrating people belong to the rural area of the region (43.2% from the district of Gjirokastra and 28.9% from Tepelena).

³³⁷ According to the Registry Office in the districts of Gjirokastra region.

Figure 5: The density map

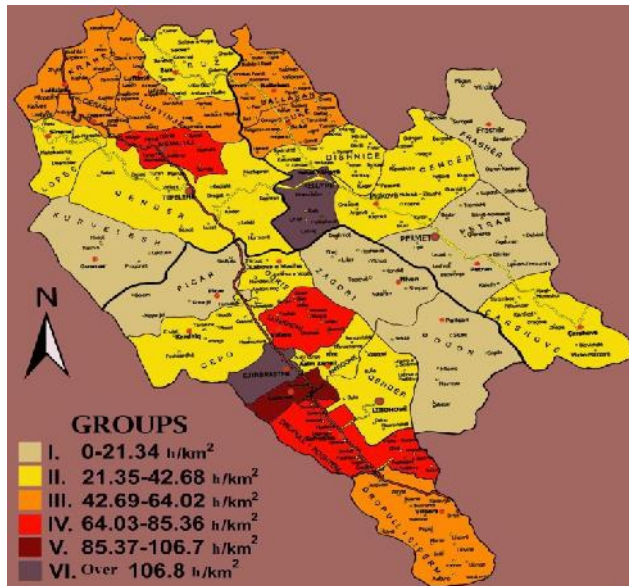
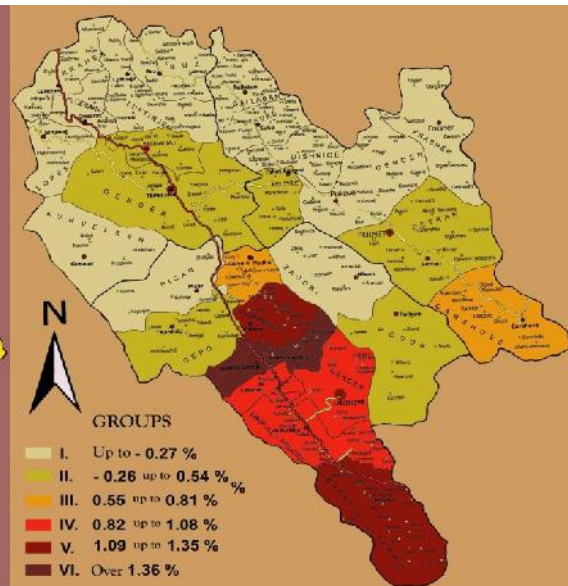


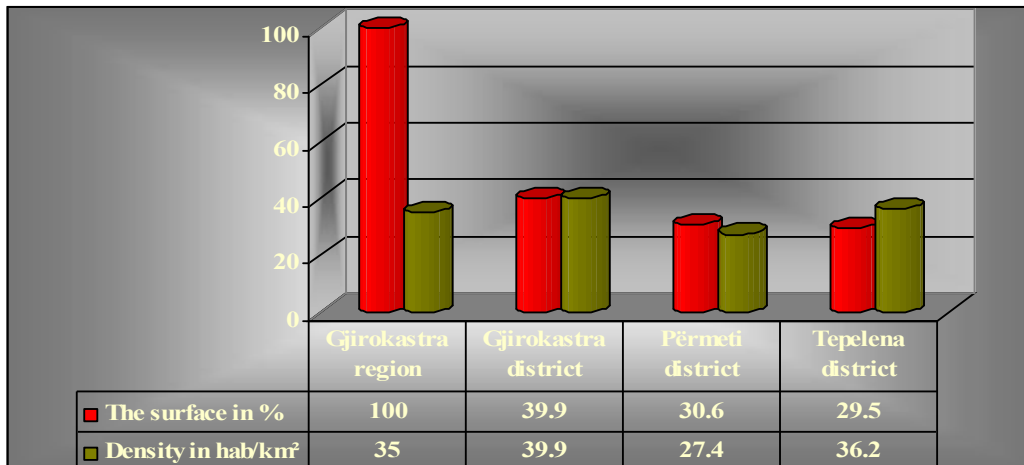
Figure 6: Database map of the average annual increase



By Civil Records, in the rural area of the region of Gjirokastra 50% of the communes there is found the rural population of 40.6% and it has a negative average annual rhythm of the population growth (up to 0.3%); 19.2% of the communes there is found the rural population of 22.2% and it has an annual average increase of -0.3 up to 0.5%; 26.9% of the communes there is found the rural population of 35.3% and it has an annual average increase 0.5% up to 1.4%; there is found an annual average increase of 2.1% only in the commune of Antigone.

During the 2001-2009 period, too, the number of the rural population continued to decrease at an yearly average rate of -1.4%, where the greatest decrease continues to happen in the district of Tepelena at a rate of -2.6%. The rapid rate decrease of the rural population brought about *the decrease of the rural density for each unit of the general surface*: from 38.3 in h/km² a year. Immigration is the main factor that caused great changes in the density index. Districts' differentiation, according to density, influences a lot the district urbanization scale. Thus, in 2004, in the district of Gjirokastra the urban population represented 46.1% and its density was 71.9 in h/km², whereas in the district of Permet the urban population represented 41.2% and its density was 42.4 in h/km².

Figure 7: Surface dispersion according to density in the rural area in 2004



This unequal dispersion of the rural density brought about the rapid urbanization near the urban areas of the prefecture, showing decreasing agricultural activity, rural stability in the municipalities near the cities and tourism perspective in the remote mountainous areas. The population density increased only at the altitude of 300m, as a result of the concentration of the people coming from the mountainous areas. The highest number of population was concentrated: at an altitude up to 300m (14.8% of the region surface): from 45.3% in 1989 to 55.3% in 2004; at the altitude of 301-600m (23.8% of the region surface): from 34.3% in 1989 to 31.1% in 2004; at the altitude of 601-1000m (31.0% of the region surface): from 19.1% in 1989 to 12.9% in 2004; at the altitude over 1000m (30.4% of the region surface): from 1.3% in 1989 to 0.7% in 2004. During the period of 1989-2004 the yearly average increase of the rural density is -0.2 in h/km^2 . After 1990, thanks to the political, socio-economic, natural and demographic factors, the centre of gravity of the population³³⁸ was transferred to the urban areas of the coastal and central parts of the country (the prefecture of Tirana, Vlora, Durres) or abroad. The same shifting tendency (towards the North by 5.1 km and towards the West by 7.2 km) was shown by the median average centre, too³³⁹.

– *The age structure*

³³⁸ Q (Ave X; Ave Y, where $Ave X = \sum x_i \cdot p_i / \sum p_i$ and $Ave Y = \sum y_i \cdot p_i / \sum p_i$): the point of the arithmetic average centre, where are met the two orthogonal lines in the topographic map, around which is achieved the dispersion and attraction of the region's population.

³³⁹ The position of the point that divide the dispersion of the region's population in two equal parts, which is calculated by adding the number of the population at length as well as at width up to reaching the half.

During the 1990s immigration influenced a lot the definition of the age structure. We notice an immediate decrease in the number of the rural working young population in comparison to the old one: in 1989 there were 12 old people for each 100 working people, in 2001 there were 16 people. In 2001, the weight of the 0-14 year's old age-group decreased in comparison to 1989, for a period of 12 years whereas the weight of the above 50 years old age-group increased in comparison to 1989, having direct social-cultural consequences.

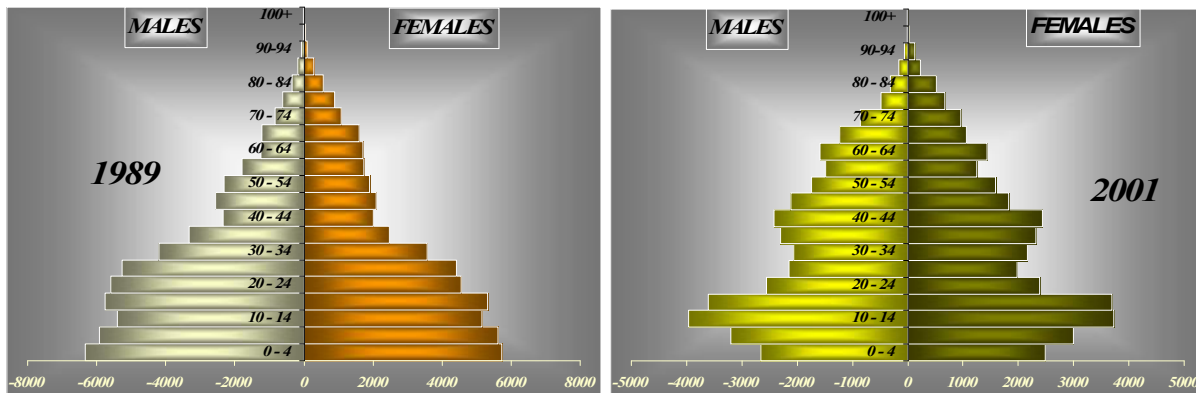
Table 1: Types of the age structure in the rural area in the period between two censuses 1989-2001

Types of structures	Year	Rural population in percentage		
		0-14 years	15-49 years	Over 50 years
Progressive type	1989	32.2	50.3	17.5
Stationary type	2001	27.7	49.4	22.9

Source: Sinani (2003)

The analysis of *the form of the age pyramid* shows the particularities of today's evolution of the region population, the features and the tendencies of its natural movement.

Figure 8: The pyramids of rural population according to age and gender by registration 1989 and 2001



As a result of the slowing down of the natural growth rates and the high selective immigration scale, the region rural population age structure changed from a pyramid of progressive type before 1990 (having a large basis, where the population under 15 represented 40% and where the pyramid had a narrow point at the top, where the above 50 years old population represented under 10%), a pyramid of a stationary type (having a narrowing point at the top), with a decrease at the age-group up to 15 and an enlarging point at the top, where the old people over 50 represent 23.0%), starting so the demographic ageing process. The demographic population ageing scale is clearly shown by *the old age index*³⁴⁰.

According to the 2001 census, the highest numbers concern the municipalities of Zagorie (164.7%), of Odrie (106.3%), of Pogon (81.7%), of Qender Libohove (65.7%), of Cepo (51.8%), of Lunxheri (41.4%), of Antigone (40.6%) in the district of Gjirokastra, the municipalities of Carcove (77.7%), of Petran (46.3%) and Ballaban (42.5%). As a result of high births, Tepelena remains the district with the youngest rural population in the region of Gjirokastra (the index of the old age is 27.9%), according to the 2001 census, the prefecture rural population has *an average age* of 34.7 years in comparison to 32.2 years in 1989. In 2001, 50% of the region rural population has a *median age* of 32.5 years in comparison to 29.4 years in 1989. The highest value of this indicator is represented by the municipality of Zagorie (44.0), Odrie (39.9), Pogon (38.2), Qender Libohove (36.4) and Carcove (37.5 years).

³⁴⁰ (P65+/P0-14 years or P60+/P0-19 years), the aging index is $\geq 40\%$, the population has entered the process of aging demographic.

Figure 9: The geographical spread of the age survey (PhD. Albina Sinani)

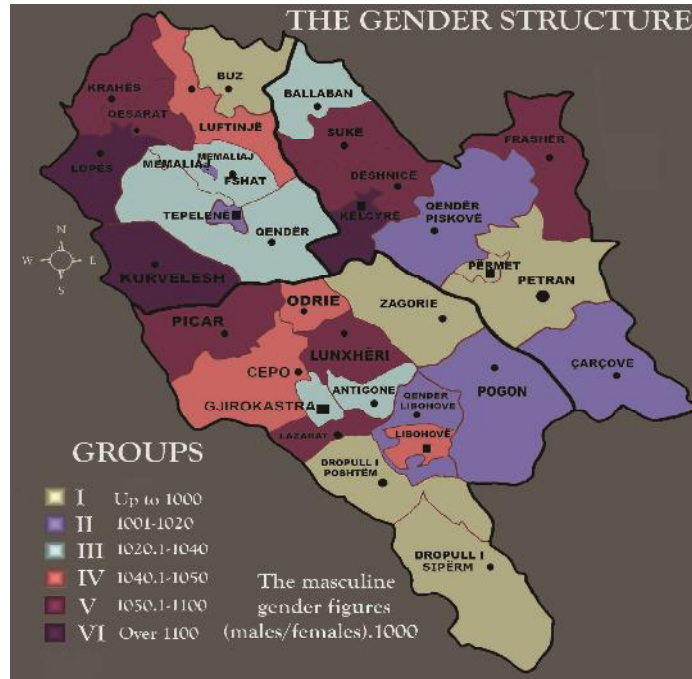


- *The gender structure*

In the course of years the coefficient of masculinity was scaled down as a result of its being influenced by immigration in the sex structure. The coefficient of masculinity for the age groups of 20-24 years³⁴¹ was scaled down from 1226.9 to 1064.8‰. The sex structure changed depending on the altitude above the sea level: in the high altitude rural settlements the coefficient of masculinity is high (1108.8‰, because the population is younger and the average age is low). According to 2001 census the highest value of the sex proportion for the region of Gjirokastra is represented by the municipality of Odrrie with 114.1% (114 males to 100 females), whereas at national scale it is 99.5%.

³⁴¹ The processing of the data in the 1989 and 2001 registers: $Km = Pm(20-24) / Pf(20-24) \cdot 1000$

Figure 10: The map of gender structure (PhD. Albina Sinani)



- **The models of mortality**

After 1990, infant mortality saw a decrease (14.95‰), whereas at national scale 33‰. The main factors that influenced this development are the health services policies offered by different state institutions and organizations. The decrease in infant mortality under one year old constitutes a positive tendency for the increase of the age average prolongation indicator³⁴² at a region scale and in the rural area. Up to 1989, the age average prolongation in Gjirokastra region was 72 years whereas in the districts of Gjirokastra, Permet and Tepelena was 72.7, 72.2 and 71.1 respectively. After 1989, as a result of the scaling down of infant mortality, the age average prolongation increased. In the Mediterranean and east-European context the average longevity (the age average prolongation) was 74.26 years, at a national scale it was 72 years and at region scale it was 73.78 years. The increase of hope of life constitutes an important target. The number of deaths per 1000 inhabitants, since 1950, had been decreasing, from 10.6 per 1000 inhabitants to 5.3 in year 2000.

Table 2: City-village changes between age average prolongation and infant mortality

³⁴² Misja 1987, p116: (Z=73.327-0.04834·V).

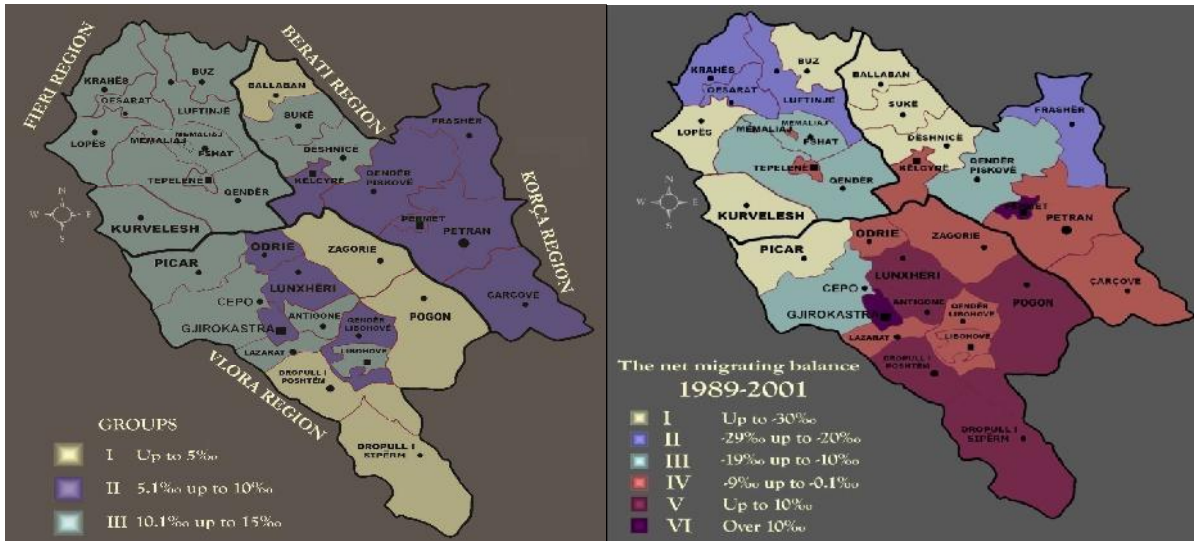
Average expectancy	Difference city-country			
	Region	Gjirokastra	Përmet	Tepelena
'89-'94	0.2	-0.19	0.01	0.71
'94-'99	-0.1	-0.81	0.02	-0.42
'99-'04	-0.29	-0.52	-0.03	0
'89-'04	0.02	-0.45	0.06	0.56

- **The models of birth-rate**

In the period between the last two censuses, the increase in birth-rate reached a level that was close to European standards, immigration takes place at a large scale and has strongly marked the age pyramid, external immigration changed a lot the balance among the regions of this area. In the last period (2001) the birth-rate at prefecture scale is 2.13 children per woman (at a national scale 2.47). This sudden scaling down is explained by the increasing scale in the use of contraceptives as well as the large scale immigration of young people at a stage of reproduction. The scaling down of synthetic fertility coefficient was considerable since 1960, where the levels were 4.1 children per woman. This scaling down was rapid during the last decade: by the mid 1990s up to 2001 birth-rate saw a loss -37.3%. According to the 1990 Registry Office figures, in the rural area, the number of births per 1000 inhabitants was 25.0, whereas in 2000 this indicator amounted to 11.5 per 1000. Part of this scaling down of births was caused by changes in the type of marriages. *The average age* of getting married mounted for females in 23.8 years as well as for males in 29.2 years. *Low natural growth is shown* in the municipalities of Dropull i Poshtem (3.71‰), of Dropull i Sipërm, Zagorie, Pogon and Ballaban (2.93‰. Whereas for mortality the transition period is coming to its end, for birth-rate the transition period is still under process.

Figure 11: The map of the natural growth
Albina Sinani)

Figure 12: The net migration map (*PhD.*



• **The immigration process**

Since 1990, the negative rural population increase has been a result of immigration, mainly the external immigration at a large scale, which has been the main factor to the changes happening to the rural population. Comparing the data about the number of population in Gjirokastra region according to 2001 census figures³⁴³ and according to the Registry Office figures there is a difference of 56587 inhabitants (population included in the process of immigration inside and outside the country).

According to INSTAT, in the 1989-2001 periods, the number of the region internal immigrants was 17098, so the number of the external immigrants was 39489, who constitute 25.3% of the general number of the 1989 population (mainly the young male element). The immigration movements have lead to some loss of population-a problem having direct consequences in the rural development of the south part of the country. According to INSTAT, during the 1989-2001 periods³⁴⁴, 6.8% of the country's total internal immigration was made up by the region of Gjirokastra's immigrants (towards the prefectures of Tirana with 44.6%, of Vlora, Fier, Durres and Berat).

³⁴³ INSTAT, General population and house census 2001, Population of Albania in 2001, 2002.

³⁴⁴ Migration in Albania, 2004, p13-16.

Table 3: The course of internal immigration in Gjirokastra region during the 1989-2001 periods

Name	Progress of pop.		Net migration		Balance of net inner migration		
	Years	1989-2001	Mal es	Fem ales	S. migr.	In according to '89	% to In % every year
Gjirokastra region	-	-	-	-	-		
	4316	27.	13.6	-14.1	1441	-9.2	-0.8
	7	7			2		
Gjirokastra district	-	-	1	1.3	498	0.8	0.1
	1172	17.					
	6	7					
Përmet district	-	-	-	-23	-		
	1399	35.	22.6		6118	-15.4	-1.3
	5	2					
Tepelena district	-	-	-	-26.5	-		
	1744	-35	25.2		8792	-17.6	-1.5
	6						

Source: Elaboration of the data of registration 1989, 2001.

Immigrants' remittances constitute an important means to the social-economic development of the rural area of Gjirokastra region, to the relieving poverty, to supporting investments and modifying the style of rural living. For 2004, the region of Gjirokastra was the first, at a national scale, concerning immigrants' remittances per family (35634 euros/family on the average)³⁴⁵.

³⁴⁵ The Immigrants and Remittances, p45.

- ***The size of family***

After the political transitional period, the size and the structure of the family has been the decrease of the number of rural families and their members. The foreign emigration, the lessening of marriages (from 8.4‰ to 4.9‰) and the increase of divorces (from 0.7‰-1.0‰) have had an impact in the decrease of the rural family composition. Since the general registration in 1989, the size of family has become to decrease. In 2001, the rural population lived in 15730 families: with an average of 4.3 members per family from 4.9 in 1989. The city families are smaller than those in the villages: 3.8 to 4.3 persons per family. There is detected a bigger concentration in the families with up to 2 members (19.6% and 17.9%). In a district level, the families with the largest number of members (above 6 members), are present mostly in the communes of the district of Tepelena (26.7%), Lazarat (32.5%) in Gjirokastra and Deshnica (30.5% in Permet). The decrease of the family size, the break of patriarchal frames, the increase of the 65-year group are an evidence of the affiliation of the characteristics of the rural families in the region with those of Europe-consequence of the great influence of emigration and big contacts with the emancipated world.

The process of the pass from the multi-couple families to single-couple or double-couple families has reached the climax; however, the patriarchal family environment is felt even these days in the remote rural parts of the region. This happens because the privatisation of the family property (dwellings, farmland etc,) after 1991 (Law 7501), identified the family as the base economic and produce unit, such causing the livening of the traditional norms. *The divorces* in the rural area have increased from 0.7‰ in 1989 to 0.9‰ in 2004. There has been an increase in the number of divorces per 1000 marriages in 167. According to the education level, the greatest number of the divorces happens among the couples with 8-year school education, with the highest value in the district of Permeti 63.3%, whereas according to the years of marriage in the year 1989 has been within the couples of 2-year marriage (60.7%) and in 2004 in within the couples of 5-year marriage (55.3%). The economic crisis has greatly enforced the existing tendencies; however, it is difficult to differentiate them from one another. The data elaborated in the above tables, show the bias towards the demographic growth of

population or towards aging, which are almost inevitable. Their diversity reminds us that the future, whatever it is, is much more insecure than before.

Figure 13: The family map (*PhD. Albina Sinani*)

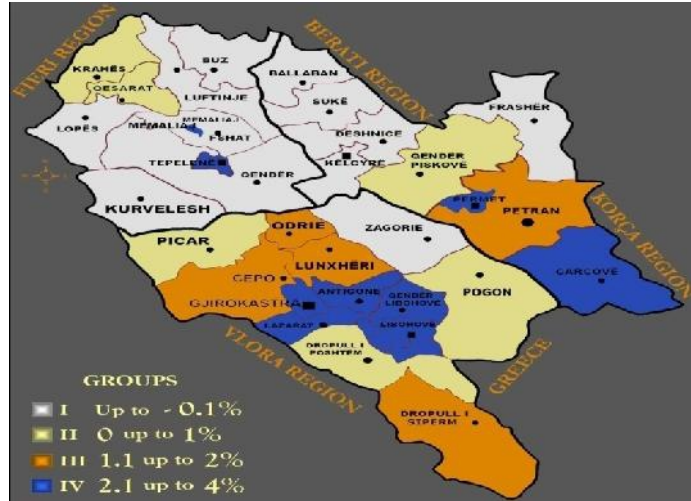
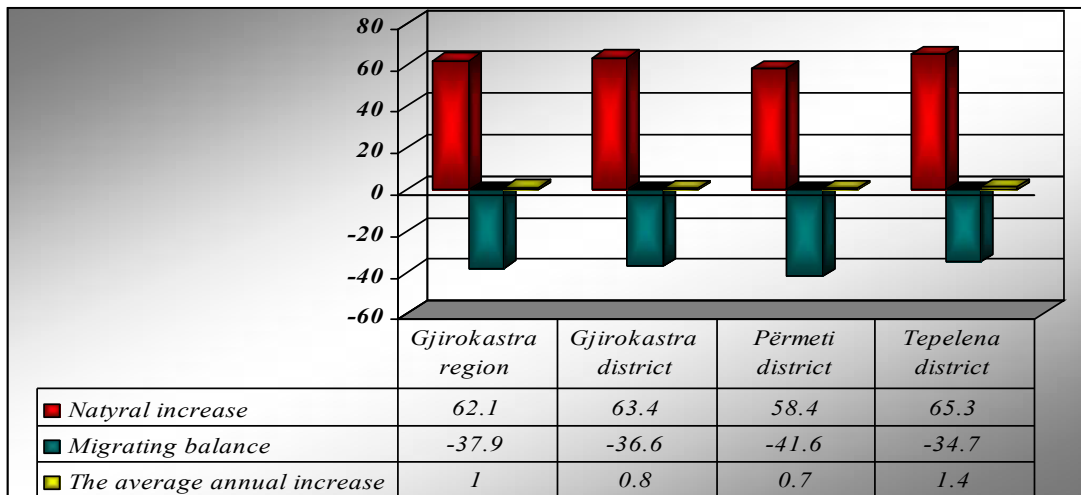


Figure 14: The Average annual increase (*PhD. Albina Sinani*)



Suggestions :

To draft convenient and sustainable strategies to soothe poverty and to encourage the regional economic growth.

The infrastructure to be improved by creating new job possibilities; increase of the incomes; perfection of the medical service towards the rural population.

To soothe away the migration phenomenon and restrain this rural urge by investing in having a socio-economic sustainable development.

To draft certain economic policies giving more space to local, public and private authorities.

To draft demographic policies concerning the local migration of rural areas and to protect the urban life features and bright rural traditions, being seriously endangered by mass migration and settlement full of dispute over social and property conflicts.

Conclusion:

The rhythm of the rural population change in Gjirokastra region has been a fast one. The rural aging population is accompanied by a young sparse population and an old dense one. Since the end of 1980, the decrease of rural birth has lessened gradually the large and middle families. The family size has been decreasing, simultaneously being accompanied with a smaller number of children. The rural area of Gjirokastra region is affected by a mass of local migration (mainly towards Tirana and Durrës) and by migrants going abroad (mainly towards Greece) identifying a widening gap among the pyramids of the young rural population. It is also identifying a sharp contrast at the index of rural density with a loss of 54% of its population. The wide fluctuation of rural population has immediately affected the density and aging structure of the economically active population, with disastrous consequences for the future.

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