

ALBANIA: A Short History of Housing and Urban Development Models during 1945-1990.

Besnik ALIAJ

MA in Urban Management

Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development

PO Box: 2995, Tirana Albania

www.co-plan.org

Acknowledgement:

This material is prepared by Besnik Aliaj in the framework of the ENHR Conference organised by MRI, Metropolitan Research Institute, in Hungary 1999. However it must be underlined the fact that the paper summarises information about the Albania's housing/urban modes by exploring especially the work done previously by: (i) Derek Hall: Housing policy in the Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union - Albania; (ii) Berth Danermark: Post-war urban and regional development in Albania 1945-1990; (iii) Lena Magnusson: Housing policies in the socialist Third World - Albania. Their contribution is highly acknowledged, while very few materials indeed are published about this subject and such specific period of Albania.

Background up to 1990

Albania was one of the least known countries in the world and virtually isolated from foreigners up to late 80s. Most studies on Eastern Europe lacked reliable and complete information about Albania. Usually it was totally ignored, or in the best case mentioned as the smallest and the least developed country of Europe. As a totalitarian system, Albania's communism was immune to criticism for almost 45 years, and information on domestic issues was tightly controlled.

Urban development in Albania is quite special, because of:

- (i) the consistent application of the planned economy;
- (ii) the strong ideological commitment and homogeneity;
- (iii) the inherited backwardness - the country was still in many respects a medieval society up to 1945;
- (iv) the industrialisation and urbanisation are features only of the period of post - World War Two times;

- (v) the authorities refused integration of the country into the global economic system;
- (vi) and they followed strict self-reliance policies.

Below it is analysed the process of urbanisation, as well as urban structure in itself, within a broad framework of: (i) the economic system; (ii) the social system and class structure; (iii) the historical development; (iv) the geopolitical settings; (v) and the specificity of situation in Albania.

The Albanian Economy up to early 90-s

At the brink of 1945, Albania was liberated from nazi forces, and power was controlled by a communist regime. At that time the country was known as the poorest and the most backward one in Europe. The policy of communist government was to set-up new industry in a "Stalinist" way by: a) giving priority to the development of heavy industry; b) developing parallel light and consumer goods industries; c) and developing harmoniously industry and agriculture.

General development of the economy: The economic development in Albania was characterised by: (i) initially higher levels of economic growth than population growth; (ii) rapid but erratic growth up to the end of 1960; (iii) a continuous decline from the beginning of 1970s; (iv) the worst ever recorded situation, during 1984-85; (v) further decrease of economic activities during 1987-1988; (vi) total economic collapse at the brink of and during early 1990s. Given such atmosphere, the industry was not able to accommodate a speed-up urbanisation process.

Indeed, there were two serious indicators proving the deep economic crisis the country was facing: (i) the real income per capita - the GDP per capita - decreased seriously, especially during 80-s (e.g. from 10% in 1990, to 21% in 1991); (ii) the substantial reductions of infant mortality in early stages, started again to increase (e.g. from 121 cases per 1,000 births in 1950, towards 30.1 cases per 1,000 births in 1985, and 30.8 cases per 1000 births in 1989).

The investments: A characteristic of Albanian economic policy of that time has been the '*policy of self-reliance*'. As consequence, the economic and technological development within the country were very slow, and by mid 70-s all investments had to be financed only by domestic production. According to the 1974's communist Constitution, it was not allowed to take any credit or loan abroad. In this way exports and imports had to be yearly balanced. However, should not be neglected the fact that essential contributions came from international foreign sources, such as from: (i) URSS during the period of 1950-1960; (ii) and China during 1961-1978.

In this situation, investments over time failed gradually through a negative trend, having negative impact on the possibility for production in the future. From the other side, the development of urban

system was highly costly, especially as regarding the production of housing. Usually foreign aid was mainly used for industrial purposes, but not in favour of the urbanisation process, too.

Nevertheless, the housing stock has been extended and improved during the period of post-war. But, housing portions over the total investments decreased from 6.6% in 1960 towards 4.3% in 1979. To minimise the urban costs authorities applied continuously strict policies, such as: (i) the industrialisation of countryside; (ii) the creation of new small and medium industrial towns; (iii) the introduction of self-production methods within the housing sector.

The Industrial Allocation: The main principles for taking the decisions in relation with industrial allocation were: (i) setting up the industry near the raw-material and thermo-energy sources, as well as near the consumption centres; (ii) the reduction of transport and other productions of social expenses; (iii) the uniform distribution of specialised and complex industry in various country' districts; (iv) the harmonic development of industry and agriculture, in favour of the general progress of countryside; (v) supporting the intensification of agricultural production.

The main consequences of such policy were: a) the spread out of investments and industrial production in different country' regions; b) the industrialisation of rural areas of the country; c) ensuring better social - especially health - service indicators supplied to agricultural regions.

The Agricultural Sector: Some of the main characteristics of Albanian agriculture of the time were: (i) the country was the most collectivised society in Europe; (ii) private property was banned as a matter of ideological principle; (iii) private properties of "capitalists" were expropriated during 1945-1946; (iv) land-holdings were redistributed to 70,000 farmers through the so called "The Agrarian Reform" of 1945-1946; (v) up to 1976 all private land was nationalised; (vi) small private trade within the agricultural sector, including private rural housing, were tolerated; (vii) the agriculture was the major producer, employing over 60% of the country's labour force; (viii) 80% of the agricultural output was controlled by almost 420 agricultural collective co-operatives; (ix) all direct taxation and levies were abolished in 1969, but wages remained still very low; (x) the minimisation of differences between distinct occupational groups, such as town and countryside, at the ratio 1 to 2.

In fact, the efficiency of agricultural sector was considered an important condition for high urban growth, because of the capacity to feed a large share of urban population. The main problems for the agricultural sector is summarised in five points: (i) the very low level of initial self-supporting; (ii) the low level of agricultural production and productivity, meaning rapid growth in some aspects like grains, but problems in some other aspects, as live-stock farming, fruit growing, etc.; (iii) the labour-intensive agricultural production; (iv) the lack of radical improvement over time within the sector; (v) the difficult urbanisation growth, whereas the living standards decreased.



In practical terms, authorities used the agricultural development both as a tool to reach egalitarian goals, and as a barrier for preventing the urbanisation. Finally, the objective of agricultural policy during 1945-1990 has been: a) up to late 70-s, the improvement of living conditions in the less-favoured agricultural areas; b) after 70-s, the concentration of resources in well-suited regions of high productivity.

Other Important Factors: There are to be mentioned also additional factors that influenced the urban and regional development of Albania between 1945-1990, such as: (i) the awareness of the historical development - the fact that Albania was part of the Ottoman Empire for almost 5 centuries is not to be neglected; (ii) the spreading of population all over the country's regions for defence purposes - especially in northern and southern part of country - where authorities did not allow any significant migration; (iii) the geography must also be taken into consideration, as the country is small, very hilly and mountainous over almost 80% of its territory.

The Urbanisation in Albania during 1945-1990

The whole process and structure of urbanisation in Albania between 1945 and 1990 were characterised by the combination of two factors: (i) the concentration¹; (ii) and the centrality²!

The (Anti-) Urbanization Policies: The key principles of Albanian urban politics of the time have been both the development of rural areas and restraining of urbanisation. The main characteristics of such policy were: (i) the distribution of population - 1/3 in urban areas and 2/3 in rural areas; (ii) the increase of urban population during 1945-1960 - at that time in capital Tirana lived less than 7% of population.

In order to establish control over urban growth, around every city were introduced town borders, or the so-called 'yellow line'. Town borders constituted the division between rural and urban territory, and it was not possible to allow urban expansion beyond it. If population grew in such levels that urban development reached yellow line, additional people were directed to other existing or new cities. Special permits were necessary for those who wanted to move to other urban centres. In this case people had to show proofs of a job. The concept of *urban area* in Albania was defined in terms of *urban administrative area*. There were three main criteria for living centres to receive the status of 'town': (i) *the activity*, including the dominance of industrial labour market, and the location of local administration/authorities in the living centre; (ii) *the number of inhabitants*, e.g. the population of area must have been of some size but no lower limit was fixed officially, varying from 2,000-5,000 inhabitants; (iii) as well as, *the impact* on the surroundings (meaning the labour market) and on the social dimension (meaning the urban life-style).

As conclusion, the general objective of the Albanian urban policy has been to harmonise the developments of the network of country's human settlements. Rural settlements were characterised by a structure of almost one-dimensional class, because of the dominance of agricultural production and lack of concentration of administration. Urbanisation in itself was characterised by very low speeds.

Rhythms of Urbanisation:

main periods of urbanisation in Albania:

(i) *Pre-war Period, 1920-1938:*

(ii) *World War II Period, 1939-1945:*

(iii) *Post-war Period, 1946-1959:*

Up to the year 1990, there are distinguished six

During this period the country was described as extremely poor and rural. Towns had only administrative and commercial functions, and only 15.4% of population lived in urban areas.

A considerable number of population was pushed for security reasons into towns. The urban population increased temporary 21.4%, but after the war people moved back towards the countryside.

During this period the communist government tried to consolidate power by promoting the establishment of the so-called "working class". For this reason, substantial and permanent increase of urban population took place. During

¹ The concept of concentration involves mainly the concentration of population, and is mainly depended on demographic and economic processes. It involves centralisation forces of economic, technologic and geopolitical character, which in certain particular time and place generate certain levels of resources for the respective society. Concentration mobilises: a) politic and ideological structure dominating society; b) the way political elite exercises control over production and distribution of resources; c) and specific ecological settings where distribution takes place.

Different modes of control over production and distribution of resources depend on: a) how different elite control the flow of sources between different markets; b) how efficient they are at converting resources between political and economic markets.

Concentration is manifested in various ways including:

(i) non-economic factors, such as the demography (population density and development), the country size, and topography; (ii) economic factors, such as the primacy of country (agrarian or industrial), the relation between spheres of production, and the type/level of technology; (iii) and allocation of investments.

² Centrality is a concept related to: (i) the way control over resources is exercised, for example through material factors (distribution and production), or through symbolic factors (ideology); (ii) the way resources are distributed, which is crucial for urbanisation process; (iii) the identification of ruling elite; (iv) the identification of institutional framework, such as; total control of state over distribution (socialist), or market-oriented distribution without any significant intervention of the state (capitalist).



(iv) *The Period during 1960-1969:*

(v) *The Period during 1970-1979:*

(vi) *The Period during 1980-1990:*

the first half of 50-s, practically the peak of urbanisation, the national annual growth of urban population was at 1.4%.

The urbanisation process slowed down and annual growth of population reduced at 0.23%.

The annual population growth drooped at 0.18%.

The annual population growth was only 0.1%.

Reduction of Welfare Geographic Disparities: One of the objectives of Albanian "Marxism" has been the reduction of several existing gaps among: (i) the different social classes; (ii) the urban and rural areas; (iii) and the different regions, too. In this respect, most of the attention was paid to the geographical inequalities, thus welfare was distributed through an egalitarian policy in terms of class, gender and region.

The main actions for the reduction of geographical inequalities included: (i) the allocation of industrial investments; (ii) the electric reticulation of all villages countrywide; (iii) the establishment of the roads' network, connecting all villages and other living centres; (iv) the servicing of new water-supply systems; (v) the extension of a network of health institutions and improvement of the existing services; (vi) the creation of agricultural co-operatives and state farms; (vii) the higher and incremental increase of incomes for rural population in comparison to the urban one; (viii) the obligatory appointment and transferring of graduated university students towards peripheral and rural regions, at least for a conditional period of 3-5 years; (ix) mobilisation of the so-called '*volunteers*' from education and health sectors to work for at least 1-2 years in the most backward regions.

Certain variables, correlated to the proportion of urban population, existed and were reflected in the dynamic growth of rural population. This population grew for several decades faster than the urban population. However, in terms of correlated variables there were distinguished: (i) *negative relations*, such as the high rate of nativity, the rapid increase of population, and low possibilities for comprehensive services like schools and health care centres; (ii) and *positive relations*, such as the relatively small number of total population, the affordable levels of population density and urbanisation rate. The last correlation depended on the indicators of collective consumption. For example, the average indicator of social services for all the country was between 0.499-0.774. Whereas, for education the indicator showed higher, for health it appears lower. In any case, if excluding Tirana, the health indicator showed half of the national average. This fact clearly evidences the role of capital, but it also proves the relative equality that existed between other districts. A more careful analysis of welfare indicators (education and health) of the time shows that Tirana scored higher percentages for each indicator. In addition, two southern districts: Gjirokastra and Kolonja, scored high results in some services and low in some others. The rest of districts (all in total 26) could classify in two main groups: a) *the average group*, involving 17 districts, scored the indicator of 65%; b) *the low-level group* of 6



districts - 5 located in the north-eastern part of Albania - scores the indicator of 23%.

Some of the main reasons behind the disparities might be also explained by: (i) the mountainous and difficult relieve of backwarded districts; (ii) the last ones inherited certain historical backwardness before 1945; (iii) these regions have been historically isolated from neighbouring countries, especially with Yugoslavia in north; (iv) the inherited traditional life was against the new style of (communist) life and made their inhabitants, mainly peasants, less willing to accept the system of "socialism".

The Housing Policy in Albania during 1945-1990

By the end of World War II, housing in Albania inherited a neglecting over the generations, and one quarter of housing stock (more than 62,000 houses) were damaged or destroyed. In years later the country would face a serious national housing crisis. The situation worsened especially in urban areas, because of the rapid urbanisation rhythms; high birth-rates; and further aggravations by earthquakes.

However, it is to be recognised that communist authorities undertook great efforts to improve the situation, including:

- (i) the building of 185,000 new apartment housing units, during 1945-1970, with an average of 74,000 units per annum, whereas the annual population increase was 40,000-50,000 people;
- (ii) the introduction of prefabricated building systems during 70-s, setting up in the Tirana outskirts a prefabrication plant to meet the demand for new urban housing;
- (iii) further emphasising of the rural development, to ease pressure over urban areas, such as rustication of urban youth and cadres, etc.;
- (iv) the extension of rural housing programs to meet the needs of urban-to-rural influxes.

As result of these measures over 80% of the total population were accommodated in new houses that were built only after year 1944. Starting from 70-s, housing in Albania meant usually three basic forms: (i) the blocks of apartments/flats in urban areas; (ii) the one- or two-stories dwellings of countryside, mainly in co-operative peasantry; (iii) and the small apartment/flat blocks of state farm workers.

The State Housing Policy: During 1945-1990, the housing investments in Albania increased from 4.3% to 6.7% of the total investments. The share of government-built dwellings, including those belonging to state farms, increased (from 10% by late 40-s to 50% by early 70-s). In principle there were three basic forms of tenure over housing of the time in Albania: (i) the renting of flats from the state; (ii) the co-operatively owned flats, mainly in rural areas; (iii) and the privately owned houses. The characteristics of dwellings in the cities included the renting of state-owned flats, and construction



of multi-family housing blocks. These dwellings were built either through state owned enterprises or by voluntary campaigns of labour. In the rural areas of the country, mainly co-operatives or state farms, lived almost 300,000 households. Dwellings that were produced during 1945-1980 were built mainly by three sectors: (i) state sector; (ii) co-operative sector; (iii) and private sector.

The Characteristics of Housing during 1945-1990: The main characteristics of housing demand in Albania up to 1990, reflected the respective demographic developments. In 1989, Albania counted 3.2 million inhabitants. Indeed, the average rate of annual growth during 80-s was 2%, and population growth was considered as the fastest in Europe. For this reason, the Albanian population was relatively young, and the average age reached 26 years. Such demographic characteristics imposed the increase of housing demand. From the other side, the sizes of households were comparatively large due to: (i) the overcrowding (more than one couple shared a dwelling); (ii) and culture (by tradition the eldest son should take care and share dwelling with parents). However, the increase of the number of families went faster than the increase of population due to the tendency for creating smaller families of four to five persons, which was quite different from the big patriarchal family models inherited from the past. More precisely, the number of families grew 35%, whereas the population by 25%. Another issue was the reduction of number of one- and two-person households. Whereas, the European figure for this group in 1990 indicates 30-35%, in Albania it decreased in less than 10%. One of the main factors for this was the strong traditional values of marriage and family, as well as the community pressure because ideological and political background.

The General Housing Trends: The general trends of state investments on housing and dwelling completion included several aspects. Up to 1970, it distinguished a continuous increase of the number of new dwellings. Since 1970, housing plans targets were apparently not completed. This was immediately reflected by the decline of national birth rate. Indeed, the attention of Albanian authorities after 1970 concentrated still on: (i) the softening of country's quantitative housing problem; (ii) the need for replacement of existing housing stock, 20% of which was built before 1945; (iii) the increased attention on the quality of buildings; (iv) the greater use of speed-up construction methods, such as prefabrication; (iv) and the special attention paid to the capital Tirana, where housing was aggravating day by day.

Another factor that influenced the reduction of the volume of new housing after 1970 was the loss of importance of voluntary-labour programs, as consequence of the shortage of individual time for such constructions, as well as less availability of building materials. However, self-build dwellings maintained still their pre-eminent role in the countryside. During 80-s, it was distinguished a declining proportion of the state housing investments in total. Whereas, authorities struggled to relatively increase the share of state in new housing by 50%, in practical terms it was noticed the fluctuation of average number in completion of new housing.

The Internal Domestic Provision: In general the apartments built in urban areas had 1-2 (maximum 3) rooms, with a kitchen and necessary annexes and a bathroom, in addition. The blocks of apartments were built up to the maximum elevation of six storeys, but no lifts were planned. As regarding the allocation of households in certain apartment, some characteristics were taken in consideration, such as the age of family members, the physical circumstances, and the ability to deal with stairs, etc. The heating systems used were usually of four types: (i) *the central oil-fuelled heating system*, for new housing of cold-winter upland areas; (ii) *the solid-fuel comprises coal*, for urban areas near such sources; (iii) *the gas*, used especially on adjacent areas to the country's major oil fields; (iv) and *the wood* for the rest of country.

The Communal Infrastructure: Until early 60s, many efforts were undertaken for maintaining and upgrading water supplies. During 1966-1970, new systems of water supply were installed into several towns and over 400 villages. New water supply systems and extensions of existing ones in 17 urban centres took place during 1971-1975. However, by mid-80s, only half of the country's villages had adequate access to water supply. The rest of rural centres had seasonal or no access at all to potable water. More than half of villages, supplied with potable water, used old pipe lines which were built before 1944. For this reason the main objective during 1985-1990, was servicing potable water towards the living centres without access to potable water. Since 1970, the access to electricity was not a problem for every living centre within the country. The national telephonic network was also completed during 1971-1975, but few/selected households had access to the service. The tentative to connect all country's living centres within a network of motor-ways is not completed yet. As regarding the retailing facilities, they were usually built in the ground floor of new multi-storey urban complexes or as market centres in few cases. Communal services in villages were usually provided by small centres of separate single-storey buildings.

Ownership, Standards, Types and Distribution of Housing during 1945-1990:

There could be distinguished two housing sectors in Albania: (i) *the state sector* of rented accommodation; (ii) and *the private sector*, the only form of private ownership by late 80-s.

A. The state rented sector: Whereas, the state rented sector dominated the urban housing market during the whole period 1945-1990, it dominated the countryside housing market only during 1970-1990. The construction of housing block in the form of flats, both in urban and rural areas emphasised: (i) the raising of standards for life and hygiene; (ii) the reduction of differences between urban and rural areas; (ii) and the egalitarian aspirations for producing equal residential conditions for citizens. As result, by the end of 80s, almost 60% of the country's population, and 80% of Tirana's population lived on flats. Married couples in Albania had to register to the People's Council Committee, if applying for





a flat. After this, they received the automatic right for access to an apartment. In practice, a considerable gap between the application time and the availability of apartment resulted. As regarding to the allocation procedures existed clear mismatches between: (i) the size of household and the size of flat; (ii) the changes of household size and constant relocation through internal circulation; (iii) the limited variation of the size and the type of flats in relation with high birth rates.

Collective housing construction in Albania originated on 1968, through the use of important source of 'voluntary' work. Programs of voluntary work have been based on: (i) the pre-war Albanian tradition in construction and housing provisions; (ii) the Stalinist methods of mass mobilisation; (iii) the emergency mobilisation, such as in the cases of earthquakes; (iv) the national donation of one-day pay towards reconstruction cost; (v) the dogma of *relying solely on Albania's own ability*; (vi) the organised groups within the framework of their residential areas or employment place; (vii) the construction undertaken during free time, in addition to the normal work; (viii) the provision of building materials and technical assistance by state building organisations; (ix) the contribution of future residents by their own unpaid labour force; (x) and the mechanism of housing owning right through voluntary labour.

The allocation of housing was made through: (i) the state, executive committee and the people's council; (ii) the enterprise directory and trade unions; (iii) the meetings of all workplace individuals; (iv) the criteria of existing living condition and contribution in the construction of building for each worker; (v) the political criteria, through the neighbourhood people's council. However, while mass mobilisation has been ideologically important and sustaining, the result has been poor in quality and in productivity. In rural areas, 60% of dwellers lived in new one- or two-storey state-owned houses, that had three main functions: a) to provide minimum standards of domestic facilities, that do not existed previously; b) to establish new state farm centres; c) to support creation of rural settlement nuclei in general; d) to respond to particular emergent needs such as earthquakes, through generally rent-free houses.

The main requirements for planning rural development were: (i) the occupation of the least possible agriculture land; (ii) the building foundations had to be in solid basement ground as Albania situates within a crusted instability zone; (iii) the buildings had to receive ample sunshine and be protected from prevailing winds; (iv) the dwellings should harmonise with each other; (v) each home had to have convenient road access to all village facilities. In this context, usually there were provided two types of dwelling houses: a). '*Elbasani*' style, single-storey dwelling with three rooms and a veranda, with internal facilities and provision for solid fuel; (ii) '*Shkodra*' style, two-storey houses for two families with three rooms, separate stairway access, internal facilities and solid fuel provision.

B. The private owner-occupied sector The socialist 'private' housing sector in Albania could be divided in two sub-groups:



(i) The pre-socialist housing, such as:

- the houses that survived compulsory purchasing and demolition, because of the new developments;
- the areas of traditional housing declared as part of "museum cities", listed under the state protection, such as the historical parts of the towns of Berat, Gjirokastra, Shkodra and Korca, Kruja, etc.;
- almost 40% of rural dwellings that remained privately-owned throughout the socialist period;

(ii) The self-built dwellings, which indeed had been limited because of:

- the planing and regulations;
- the primacy of state construction sector;
- the availability of appropriate materials;
- and the state enlisted of voluntary constructions.

In general, the standards were improved and facilities increased, even that in the rural areas people still cook on open fires and heat with traditional hearths. By the 1967, when the collectivisation of agriculture sector was fully completed, the situation showed that: (i) each co-operative had its own physical development plan; (ii) and the majority of dwellings were single-family and privately-owned houses, built with family funds. In state-build blocks maintenance problems have been a main concern.

Housing standards: Up to 1990, the plot size to a house in Albania depended on: (i) planning and regulation normative; (ii) local circumstances and allocation; (iii) wishes of the local people's council; (iii) and family ability to afford the cost of building materials. The size of the plot was: a) 150 square meters in urban areas; b) 200 square meters in rural areas; c) 300 square meters in mountainous areas; c) and maximum 500 square meters. The house plans were standardised. The procedures of plan-permission usually were long from 2-3 months. The same could be said for building materials, often supplied through the informal sector. Cost of construction was minimally reduced by the use of local stones, available all over the country, except in the western sandy coast line. For a single-family rural house, the surface area was 60-80 or maximum 100 square meters, and additional space (in average 1,000m²) for personal garden, which was usually: (i) devoted to limited personal agricultural and livestock products for family consumption; (ii) located next to the owner homes, with the tendency of phasing them all together in the future; (iii) reduced by the mid-60s between half and two-thirds of size; (iv) and associated by further reduction of the livestock, that was practically reduced in number by half.

Dwellers in private owner-occupied houses retain the right of inheritance over the basic offspring, furniture, facilities and their values. Private houses could be: (i) *sold out*, without speculation; (ii) *rented* by the 'private' rented sector, already existent but very limited in number; (iii) *rented* only for legitimate reasons and when the owner did not live either in part or in all dwelling; (iv) *rented* to no



more than one owner, without exceeding the fee of state-owned houses.

Housing types: The Albanian dwellings can be physically divided into three various/general types:

- (i). *Detached dwellings*, mainly distinguished as:
 - rural or urban detached dwellings;
 - pre- or post-war detached dwellings.
- (ii). *Low rise flats*, built in bricks by mechanised methods.
Usually they go up to three or four storeys. This type is mainly built in urban centres like Durres, Elbasan, Peqin, Levan, Lukova, etc.
- (iii). *Apartment blocks*, constructed by some degree of mechanisation and prefabrication, up to five or six storeys, mainly in the cities of Tirana, Durres, Fier, Ballsh, Kamza, etc. Usually they are: brick-built by local stone foundations, with or without concrete, and with similar types of facings;
 - with very few comprehensive prefabrication had taken place
 - while lifts are applied only to public buildings, hotels, museums or cultural centres

As for the *rural 1-2 storey dwellings* they depended on the types and local/regional tradition, including:

- The 'kulla' type - a semi-nomadic fortified pastoral dwelling in northern upland tradition, made by stone and small windows;
- The 'zadruga' type - large dwellings bordering Kosova region;
- The 1-storey dwelling in low land tradition - made in simple agricultural style by mud, wattle and thatch;
- The 'Greek' 2-storey village dwelling - built by limestone and usually on the hillsides, overlooking to the valley;
- The early post-war houses - built by brick with particular local architectural motifs, mainly in the newly reclaimed agricultural areas, such as the Maliq region in Korca;
- The houses built in emergency cases or natural disasters mainly by rapid voluntary means - such as in the cases of Dibra and Shkodra earthquakes.

Regarding *old urban 1-2 storey dwellings*, they were mostly demolished because of the new developments in the main urban centres. However, some of them survived due to the particular conditions, such as: (i) the cases under survey, because of their special traditional values; (ii) the dwellings surrounded by historic old protective city walls; (iii) the dwellings included within the traditional bazaars and urban complexes; (iv) the dwellings involved in the formerly important areas of mixed residential, retailing, wholesaling, manufacturing activities and land uses; (v) the well-built pre-war dwellings, at favourable locations for recreational purposes, such as Himara, Durresi, Pogradeci, etc.; (vi) the dwellings protected by the legislation of cultural monuments and environment,

especially those produced by early post-war period, such as Gjirokastra, Berati, Durrresi, Kruja, etc.; (vii) the dwellings supported by indirect state investments on housing, especially in the cases for tourist purposes; (viii) the dwellings that were object of work by the Institute for Restoration of the Cultural Monuments; (ix) the dwellings maintained and enhanced for ideological purposes or the so called past 'glorious national history'.

The Housing Finance in Albania up to 1990

The Incomes: The classification of incomes in Albania during 1945-1990, might be classified as below:

- (i) *Up to early 60s* - wages level in Albania were equal as the rest of Eastern Europe;
- (ii) *After the break with the Soviet block in 1961* - a shortage of qualified experts called the emergence of a differential income policy to encourage the acquisition of better qualifications, including the physically difficult job;
- (iii) *By mid 60s* - the highest and the lowest paid sector, respectively transport and food, have been in average 70% differentiated;
- (iv) *During 1967* - started attempts to reduce the highest salaries, as salaries above 1,200 Lek were cut. In this conditions the ratio between the highest and the lowest pay ranged between 1 to 2,5 and 1 to 3. All forms of income tax were abolished, but supplementary indirect payments were still present.
- (v) *By 1976* - the income differences between rural and urban areas, as well as the up- and low-land inequalities were reduced throughout several measures such as:
 - the reduction of all salaries above 900 Lek by 4-25%;
 - the reduction of incomes for teachers and scientists by 14-22%;
 - the cutting of bonuses for scientific titles, degrees, publications, and other payments by 50%;
 - the raising of wage for state farm workers, depending by plan fulfilment;
 - the payment of specialists, not on basis of working institution/district but based on their education;
 - the adjustment of wage disproportion for sectors of fishing and transport.

The main consequence of such income policy were: a) the reduction of average salary ratio for state employ workers and ministerial directors level between 1 to 2 and 1 to 2,5; b) various subsequent discrimination rural development policies that effected in favour of rural rather than urban areas, as well as up-land rather than low-land areas.

(vi) *During 1971-75* - the national incomes increased by 14.5%, whereas the incomes of rural workers increased 20.5% compared to 8.7% for urban workers. This was associated by a faster



rise in rural incomes than urban one. For example:

- the difference rate for the rise between rural and urban income was 140% greater then during 1960-70;
- the rate went up to three time greater during 1971-80;
- the income per capita in countryside increased 28% compare to 4,1% for whole population during 1980-82.

In addition, rural population increased at 1.75 million in 1980, which was greater than the country's total population in 1960 (1.61 million). This was considered a successful policy to prevent: a) rural to urban unplanned migration; b) up-land to low-land depopulation; (iii) slight demographic imbalance in the north-eastern up-land part of the country, due to the migration of young females through marriage, as well as the lack of proper co-ordination in the territorial distribution between material elements of productive forces and labour sources.

The state rented sector: As other former socialist countries had done, Albania also did not sold-off state flats to the tenants up to 1993. Throughout the District People's Council the state was concerned about: a) renting flats; b) and their maintenance, in both urban areas and state farms. The average rent level for a 1(2-3)-room dwelling, with necessary annexes and kitchen, was around 20 (33 and 42) Lek per month, equal to 1-2 days work income. Whereas, the average salary was 600-650 Lek per months, the rent represented 3.5(5.5 and 7)% of the monthly incomes. Since the right to work was forcefully pursued, these figures were at least half for two parents working. Even that income taxes were declared abolished, people had to pay for housing cost of water and electricity.

The private owner-occupied sector: The concept of the open market was not recognised in Albania up to 1990. Private houses in urban areas were said to fetch around 20-30 thousands Lek by discussible methods. The urban and rural dwellers of the owner-occupied properties were able to retain rights of inheritance at least for their offspring. The former existing property and ownership rights were retained by the individual. State credits were available for the new self-building private dwelling houses since 1950. This was not the case for purchasing existing houses. The credit repayments were made: a) for a maximum of 20-25 years period; (ii) around 50-60 Lek per month; (iii) and with no interest levied, or maximum 0.5% interest rate.

Housing Organisations/Institutions in Albania up to 1990

Design institutions: Based on the modest local Albanian experience and thanks to the Soviet aid, the first *National State Institute of Studies, Design and Town Planning* was established in Tirana in 1947. Later on, it was recognised as the Institute of Architecture and Town Planning. Its branch offices, locally known by the name *ZUP (Office for Urban Planning and Design)*, were organised in every administrative district, attached to the respective local Executive Committees, to





assist local population. This was also complemented by the functioning of the *Housing Directories* and the *State Construction Services Companies (NSHN)*, in each district. Over the times, an Urban Design/Planning Department took also shape out of the above mentioned institute, and by late 80s it was established with the name of the *National Planning Institute*, under the dependence of the *Ministry of Construction of Albania* (actually *Ministry of Territorial Adjustments and Tourism*). In addition, several other research and professional institutes were established, specialised on different sectors of development and construction.

By the end of 80s and early 90s, the district/regional planning offices were reorganised splitting the existing planning structures (ZUP) in two parts: a) the *Architectural and Urban Design Bureau (BSP)*, a semi-independent design office; b) and the *Urban Planning Department* attached to the local government bodies. The institute and its provided plans and standard designs, which were re-planned, modified and harmonised in limited elements to local conditions by its own local branches. Each town had its own five-year target plan framework. Included that was the regulating (structure) plan for purposes of construction and services. Usually these plans covered a period up to 25-years previewing both: a) the major expansion of urban area; b) and the comprehensive redevelopment of city centre and existing areas.

The regulatory plan was result of the continuous consultation between: a) the district administration; b) the local office of architecture and town planning; c) the national institute of architecture and town planning; d) the central ministries.

Another crucial issue were the principles of Albanian socialist housing architecture such as: (i) the simplicity and beauty; (ii) the anti-extravagance and anti-formalism; (iii) and the economic saving policy.

Building and physical development: During 1971-75, special attention was paid in Albania to the management of land-use. For this purpose it was pointed especially: (i) the limited arable area of country; (ii) the extremely rugged relief; (iii) the opening up of new agriculture land; (iv) the misuse of existing land fund; (v) the loss of 5,000 ha of most fertile arable land; (vi) the misuse of existing land fund; (vii) the inefficient control of land-use planning, both theoretically and practically; (viii) the need for henceforth of several stories buildings; (ix) the replacement of all urban single or two storey buildings; (x) the overseeing responsibility of state for apartments and administrative construction in urban areas.

The non collectivised rural housing in the countryside, were responsibility of co-operative peasantry. All flats built in association with state farms were administered by the state. The newly constructed dwellings were the only flats. There were built already equal amount of flats in two main ways, through: a) the state building enterprises that were arms of the central ministry; b) and the voluntary labour, starting from 1968.



The allocation mechanism: The allocation of flats built by state-building enterprises was made by: a) the Executive Committees of the District's Peoples Council; b) and the city quarters of the People's Council, in large urban centres.

The allocation legislation included in itself: a) the planning guidance; b) the construction of new dwellings; c) and the allocation of flats.

The allocation decision for voluntary-labour built apartments was undertaken in collaboration with the volunteers' organised workplace.

Housing Problems and Policy Orientation for Albania up to 1990

The major problems in the provision of the housing stock in Albania during 1945-1990 were: (i) the high birth and marriage rates; (ii) the mismatch of housing supply and demand; (iii) and the poor quality control and maintenance.

Housing quantity: The annual increase of population for Albania during 80s was: a) 32,000 inhabitants in rural areas; b) and 22,000 inhabitants in urban areas.

The annual increase of construction rate in the same period was: (i) 6,000 dwellings in the rural areas; (ii) and 9,000 dwellings in the urban areas. Indeed the sustained population with houses increased from 6.8% (1970), in 8.1% (1980) and 8.9 % (1982).

Even that about 300,000 urban and rural flats were constructed during 1945-1979, the shortage of urban apartments was present because of: a) the increasing demographic demand; b) the need to replace the existing inadequate stock. This was reflected especially in the cases of: (i) the inhabitation of new flats before services and outer facades had been finished; (ii) and the lack of apartments for newly married couples.

Demographic trends: The unique and distinctive position of Albanian demographic pattern within the spatial planning framework was expressed in different ways:

- *The relatively high levels of natural increase* - were also consequence of: (i) the Islamic and Roman catholic background; (ii) the total absence of measures to birth control; (iii) the willingness of authorities to maintain high manpower levels for military, economic and ideological purposes.
- *Birth and death rates* - were of crucial demographic importance, because: (i) the into- and out-Albania's emigration movement was virtually nil; (ii) the internal migration was totally controlled by the state for labour/construction purpose.
- *Regional variations* - reflected an explicit picture of diversity, probably to: (i) the contrast birth rates between north (high rate) and south (low rate); (ii) the influence of original religious



background respectively Roman Catholic and orthodox, which was somehow softened by the official prohibition of all religions in 1967.

- *The relatively young population* - reflected by the facts that: (i) the average age of population in 1983 was 26 years old; (ii) 3/4 of population were born and educated within the socialism system (iii) 37% of population were less than 15 years old.

Even that the population of urban areas was relatively young, an increasing number of retired people increased more than the population growth in general. In this conditions, during 80-s it was

- the present birth rate was around 27 cases per 1,000 inhabitants;
- the present death rate was around 6 cases per 1,000 inhabitants;
- the annual growth rate was four times than the European average;
- in long-run, the birth rate faced a slight decline, while during 60-s it was 35 cases per 1,000 inhabitants;
- health and welfare facilities were improved, as paid pregnancy period leaving the workplace was increased from 1.5 to 6 months;
- the numbers of births between 1981-85 compared to 1977-80 increased by 22,000;
- and the infant mortality between 1979-85 was half-reduced compared to 1979-85.

In order to change the attitudes, within the country's leadership emphasis had been also placed upon: (i) the protection of women's health; (ii) the improving domestic facilities; (iii) the melioration of pre-school education; (iv) the lowering of shop-prices for children's article; (v) the supporting of low-income families, usually an undeclared group.

Conclusions for the period 1945-1990

There are two main criteria for a country to be defined as socialist:

A. The concentration - which represents a high degree of the central political control to the local economy exposure towards the world market relations. Albania fulfilled the criteria due to:

- (i) the principle of self-reliance;
- (ii) the size smallness of the country;
- (iii) the relatively underdeveloped state of industry;
- (iv) and the exposure limitation to the political economy of the world system

B. The centrality - which represent a centralised system of resource redistribution. Albania fulfils it because:

- (i) the resource redistribution was oriented towards political goals and not along market-lines;
- (ii) of the spatial distribution of social welfare and the forced accumulation of heavy industry;



- (iii) the agricultural production increase was administered by the state instead of private landlords;
- (iv) of the profound state control over space;
- (v) the welfare was distributed in terms of class, gender and region;
- (vi) the orientation of resources emanating from the industrialisation process were not in line with private mass-consumption, but through the growth of public collective consumption, such as public health, schooling, transport, etc.

The Economy:

- (i) The development of the Albanian economy sloped down during 70-s and 80-s, after the initial high growth of 50-s and 60-s.
- (ii) The principle of self-reliance had impeded industrial development and the agricultural accumulation had been too slow to promote fast industrialisation and urban development.
- (iii) From the other side the country's elite exercised a strong control over the flow of resources. This played a significant role in shaping the urban structures. The institutional structure was characterised by the planned economy and control over information. Production resources and their distribution - allocation of either heavy or light industries - were in hands of the ruling elite.
- (iv) Other contingent factors influenced too the process. Furthermore the welfare elements such as:
a) the higher education, has been oriented towards more urban areas; b) while, health institutions and service networks have been reasonably spread out all over the country.

The Urbanisation:

- (i) A very slow and controlled urbanisation process had been the main feature of the Albanian society after 50-s.
- (ii) The hierarchical concentration has been stable and the process of urbanisation approximately stopped.
- (iii) The differences between districts and between urban and rural areas diminished. (iv) The industrial allocation was according to political objectives.
- (v) The government policy showed efforts to improve living conditions in rural areas and in the previously back-warded district.
- (vi) Industrialisation and growth of working class continued up to the 80-s, meanwhile urbanisation stopped about twenty years before.
- (vii) The long term development was result of: a) the natural growth; b) and the migration, regulated through the job and housing guaranties.

The Housing Problematique:

- (i) The orientation of housing sector up to 1985 aimed at rural areas. This aimed mainly: a) to improve conditions for rural workers; b) to provide permanent transfer of urban young dwellers towards rural areas.
- (ii) Given the continued growth rate of 2.2% per annum, by the end of 80-s already 75% of population



were under 40 years old.

(iii) The period during 1986-90 is considered as a de-emphasised and rapid change period for existing housing policy. This was associated by: a) the need to reorient housing priorities; b) the priority to infrastructure and service improvement, especially water supply; c) the upgrading of new dwellings quality; d) and the tendency for equity and efficiency trade off.

(iv) Although that country's leadership continued to criticise the soviet "perestroika", these were part of a general tendency for potential policy changes, including: a) the adjustments to remove the 'outmoded' mechanism and ways of thinking; b) the slackening discipline amongst the country's youth; c) the public debates criticising conservative attitudes towards young people; d) and the replacement of the opposers for innovation, such as the replacement of all party bureaucrats after 5-year in office, the efforts to improve foreign relations, and promotion of foreign language teaching and literature.

(v) By the end of 80s these measures resulted in: a) imports on foreign technology for building construction; b) higher elevations for apartment blocks; c) greater use of pre-fabrication, lifts installation and improved service provision; d) breaking existing constitutional limitations for loans and credits from foreign countries; e) and promotion of joint-venture development notion, employing foreign capital.

Main Conclusions: Albania 1945-1990:

(i) Apart from 50-s (the period of creation of the working-class), the urbanisation rate in Albania has been very slow.

(ii) In 1990, still 65% of population lived in the rural areas. The hierarchical concentration was low. Low migration and high natural growth in countryside were the main contributing factors for such model.

(iii) The welfare disparities because of geographical location decreased during the post-war period, although there existed still differences between urban dominated districts and the rural ones.

(iv) Tirana, as capital city, had a crucial importance, while the north-east part of the country was less developed mainly regarding to welfare indicators.

(v) The rapid economic growth before 1965, has been followed by a sharp decline.

(vi) The principles of industrial allocation were characterised by *uniforming* and *harmonising*.

(vii) The development of both agriculture and industry restricted any significant urban growth.

(viii) It seems that government neither wanted nor could cope with a high speed urbanisation process.

(ix) The main housing problems in Albania were the housing quantity versus the demographic trends, associated by the maximisation of the role of state, while excluding dramatically the involvement of the private sector.

IX. Instead of the epilogue... By late 80s Albania was also influenced by "the wind of changes". Political and economic transition in the country started disorderly and actually is often undergoing through tremendous shocks and social unrest. The collapse of former communist regime brought in surface many problems that were accumulated during several decades. Dramatic changes during



last years have been keenly recognised by western world, but they have also created new problems. The mixture of backwardness of the past, with the new problematique of nowadays, has promoted a kind "wild-west" situation that is still alive to the rest of world, through the image of Albanians leaving country by boats, and dramatic scenes of March 1997 when country went at the brink of a civil war. Nevertheless after war in Kosovo the country has seriously recovered and is moving ahead. Positive signs of developments and economic growth are noticed and nowadays Albania can be classified in a new stage of its more solid development, although still many problems remain to be solved. The disordered urban development - often very chaotic and aggressive one - is one of the main features of Albanian transition. In the same time it represents a very interesting case to be carefully analysed to understand how and why such model is developed in the heart of Europe. The ENHR conference is probably a good contribution in this respect.

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