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CASE STUDY ON PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN MIGRATIVE MOVEMENTS IN SHKODËR, ALBANIA AND LLEIDA, SPAIN

In the following article we're making attempts to achieve a scientific synthesis of migration elements of these two social geographic areas, such as Shkodër in Albania and Lleida in Spain, but focusing in particular in the incoming migrants already present in them. Such an analysis has allowed us to identify not only similarities but also differences and characteristics that are associated with these population movements and their diverse effects.

Key words: *migration, Shkodër, Lleida*

1. Introduction

Lleida presents an interesting case study, closely linked to economic and social developments that accompany population movements. Lleida part of Catalonia, with a long history of civilization, in particular during the last 10 years is affected by migration. In these 10 years Lleida's residents are faced with constant arrivals of immigrants turning it to an international destination of their settlement. This phenomena is becoming a worrying one for the Lleida's residents. Statistical data support this thesis by speaking for approximately 22% of resident population, represented by immigrants. The main reasons that make Lleida a deserved destination for immigrants, apparently is influenced by the possibilities for employment in various economic sectors of economy throughout the city, especially in the construction, agriculture, public services sector, etc.

Also quite interesting from the migration viewpoint is presented Shkodër district during the transition period. It is becoming a place of origin for a significant number of emigrants, as well as a destination for immigrants from rural areas or smaller cities. International migration, its destinations, the effects that accompany it, represent important elements in terms of socio-economic analysis of this district. Simultaneously internal migration developments in the spatial social and geographic configuration of this district are associated with

multidimensional effects of economic and social character of cultural diversity, settlements etc. Such effects have awakened not only the need to study the phenomena, but also the necessity of a scientific analysis.

We should acknowledge that data collection has been a complex and difficult process. Regarding city of Shkodër, it has a lot of newly-arrived who do not want to be registered and self-declared in front of the authorities. Some of them continue to withdraw social welfare and other benefices at the place of origin, so that is one of the reasons why they are not represented in the civil registers of the city.

2. Lleida as a migration destination

Lleida represents one of the oldest cities not only in Catalonia, but also in the entire Spain. Its development as an integral part of Catalonia, has made possible that in 2010 this city reached a population of approximately 140,000 inhabitants. Development of population and its gradual growth has been closely linked to the presence of the agriculture with huge employment opportunities. Besides it, the construction sector is identified as a potential with significant absorbing capacities as well. Gradually, especially after 1980 it is recorded a gradual increase in the services sector, closely linked with the greater attention to the touristic offer of the city and its surroundings. Besides the employment of Lleida's residents gradually we see more and more increase the number of social facilities (places of residence, production, exchange, entertainment, etc.).

The opening the extensive territories of viticulture, the construction on the basis of a city's own urban plan, the building of new residential areas and the increasing expansion of various social spaces (especially hotels, supermarkets, socio-cultural and sports centers, entertainment, etc.), require a labor force that could afford such a development in many dimensions. This situation was exploited by many companies for various types of activity to absorb their labor in their sectors.

The policies of these companies were oriented more toward finding laborers from poor countries, mainly African, closely linked to cost-effectiveness of their cheap price of work. In this way the first immigrants that arrived in Lleida, belong more to countries such as Morocco, Senegal, South Africa, Sahara, etc. The first migrative movements were under a legal immigration, based on contracts generated by different companies operating in Lleida and the relevant countries of origin of migrants. Vineyards and construction were the domain areas of their employment.

After a while we have a new development of migration in Lleida, closely linked to the innovation that shows the first immigration's wave of these contracted immigrants. Over the years, in particular in early 2000, the

immigrants settled in Lleida started gradually to pick up their family members from their countries of origin. Chain migration opened the path to the arrival and employment of other immigrants in Lleida. This started in these years a considerable migration of family members, friends and relatives of these first immigrants, who saw Lleida as an important migration destination. Lleida already represented for them an opportunity not only of employment and residence, but also the chance for a good living. Especially agriculture with its whole diversity of job offers and construction represented by the current years significant offers for employment of the immigrants. Note that the largest share of this migration is occupied by the Africans.

Lleida's growth and expansion, as we noted above, was accompanied by expansion of the various activities of the services sector. Besides the above listed activities, agriculture and construction, Lleida more and more was attracting tourists thanks to the touristic offer that it possessed. So services sector felt the need for growth and expansion, which in turn increased the demand for new labor force. Besides the local population also plenty of other immigrants coming from other countries were oriented in this sector.

It's needed to be stressed that unlike the origin of immigrants employed in agriculture and construction, who were Africans, in the service sector accounted for significant weight-Latin Americans. Apparently such a thing is closely connected with their Spanish language knowledge. This has made possible not only establish easily contacts for work, but also putting in the service sector of the economy. The presence of Latin American immigrants was mainly in hotels, restaurants, markets of different types, etc. Note that after the year 2005, closely linked to the introduction of Schengen, it's evidenced more and more the growth of a new origin of migration from Europe, for example Romanian immigrants.

3. Shkodër as migration destination

Even Shkodër by its own, very quickly in the early 90's, represented a significant migration destination. This fact was related with the name and the popularity it enjoyed in particular in its administrative neighbors, but also related to its important offer as an urbanization center.

The city of Shkodër represents economic and administrative center of Shkodër region. The population of this region was involved by internal and external movement. After 1990's the city of Shkodër featured two main directions of this movement, in the form of emigration through the removal of a significant number of residents towards the capital or developed countries, and in the form of immigration through the arrival and settlement of the population from rural or remote mountain areas into the city. As the flow of the second movement (towards the city) was greater than the first one (out of the city) urban

population had a rapid growth, despite the fact that natural increase of population declined due to declining fertility. For a period of 15 years the population has decreased in the countryside about 18% and increased 8.7% in urban area, which indicates that the migration of population from countryside to urban areas within the county has been higher than removals from the city, so the net migration has a positive value. Consequently, the urban population in the present days increased from 31% to 46%. For a period of 15 years the urban population has increased by nearly a third, despite emigration¹.

This was a very rapid change and represented an increased population pressure on scarce employment opportunities the city provides, considering that until 1990 the growth of urban population was only from natural increase and not from the urban-rural migration movements. Up to this period the rural areas were bearing the highest rate of labor employment in order to fill in the needs in cooperatives, but the decline of agricultural economy led to the increased number of unemployed in these areas. They were directed towards the city which was the center of services and industrial employment. It seemed to constitute a strong pull factor for establishing the population, but the industry quickly switched into crisis by increasing still further the number of unemployed. Uneven distribution of supply and demand for labor, the decline of agricultural activity, destruction or reduction of industrial activities operating in the city of Shkodra forced many residents to address towards Western European countries.

But on the other hand the economic system of free trade has enabled the opening of many small and some large businesses that increased opportunities for employment. Income population was predominantly young and constituted a well active force for the city. Besides this the increased number of services and the increasing needs for construction work opened other fronts and increased employment opportunities. The city expanded and very quickly changed its socio-geographic space. Human landscape was enriched with elements that did not exist before and that were associated mainly with the improvement of housing and bringing so more innovation in the construction sector. But on the other hand, there were changes to all other social spaces, such as entertainment and exchange. They increased in quantity and quality bringing so a new development in the tertiary sector of the economy. Some foreign firms began to exercise their activity in the city due to the low cost of their labor force.

Many of the newcomers, especially younger age groups of females were employed in light industry sectors as in food processing products, clothing and footwear or services. Population growth due to positive net migration continued until 2003 when are appeared the negative values of net migration due to the fact that the number of displaced exceeded the number of newcomers (fig. 1). This is explained by the reduction of the latter after the abandonment of entire rural

¹ *Strategic Development Plan, Municipality of Shkodër.*

areas which in turn gradually began to face the problem of desertification of arable land. We notice also that fertility declined affecting so the total change of population.

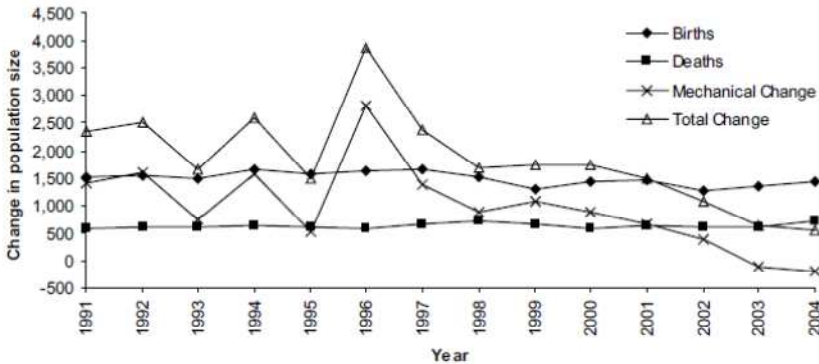


Fig. 1. Change in population size in Shkodër in 1991–2004

S o u r c e: Municipality of Shkodër

4. Similarities and differences

Similarities

In the frame of the similarities expressed in migrative movements in socio-geographical space of Lleida in Spain and Shkodër, Albania we can identify that;

- Both, the two spaces in the study represent ancient centers of civilization. Also Lleida and Shkodër lying in a favorable geographical position have been often target of attacks from foreign invaders. Lleida represents the center of province of Lleida in Catalonia, while on the other hand Shkodër is the center of northern Albania. Both are in favorable positions linking national and international routes, and therefore they have become a destination for immigrants from the surrounding areas. That's why, both areas have continued to increase in urban population. Lleida, since after the Spanish Civil War of 20th century has seen a steady urban, demographic and commercial² rise. Whereas Shkodër in the early 20th century is mentioned as the only town in Albania with over 23 000 inhabitants³.

² Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

³ Papa E., Kera G., *Regjistrimi I popullsise I vitit 1918*, rev. Phoenix, fq. 25.

- Employment opportunities in economic sectors such as agriculture, light industry, construction, tourism and services have constituted the strongest attractive factors to newcomers who are placed in each of these areas. Chain migration is also characteristic for both Lleida and Shkodër, which appears in the gradual establishment of the families immediately after a member of the family is established and stabilized. The rising level of immigration for a short period of 10–15 years has led to the return of the phenomenon of immigration often into a concern for local residents. The process of immigration in any of the cases has been selective in terms of gender and educational level. However most of the leavers from their country of birth have taken this decision for economic reasons. Their assimilation and integration has been difficult initially because of the difficulty of finding work or housing.

Differences

- Spain has been for a long period of time origin country for many immigrants. Together with Italy they were predominantly nations of emigration rather than of immigration. Only in the last two decades they have become two major host countries of immigrants. In 2005 Spain was facing a net migration per 1 000 of 15⁴. This came as a result of rapid economic modernization which turned Spain in a host country of immigrants.

- Meanwhile Albania has always been the country of emigration, with larger or smaller waves. The collapse of communism in 1990 was followed by a transition period with the economic crisis, rising of unemployment, social problems that constituted the strongest push factors for many immigrants. At the end of the decade it was thought that abroad were living 800 000 Albanians (Barjaba 2000)⁵. Throughout this migration period people moved abroad. The phenomena was parallel accompanied with its internal movement from rural to urban, and from the latter towards the capital. That's why, in the literature on migration Albania is considered as "*country on the move*" (Carletto, Davis, Stampini, Zezza, Lapaj), representing one particular case, perhaps the unique experience of population movements in Europe and beyond. The movement has been chaotic, uncontrolled and based on a policy of *laissez-faire* that allowed the abandonment of entire areas, and settling even in protected areas, agricultural land or water surfaces coasts. Impacts on the environment in many cases were negative.

- If in the case of Lleida we can talk for employment with contract or labor force withdrawal under certain agreements, we cannot say the same thing for Shkodër. Many of the newcomers are part of the informal economy and work without a contract, uninsured and often working under difficult conditions.

⁴ P. Kivisto, T. Faist (2010).

⁵ R. King (2000).

• The integration of immigrants settled in Lleida is more difficult because they belong to another culture and often have difficulty adapting to local institutions. While arrivals in Shkodër have easier assimilation because they are part of the same culture and speak the same language with the locals.

Areas under consideration have some strong points which if properly utilized will affect economic development, reduce unemployment and the proper integration of immigrants into city life. Shkodër is characterized by the average young population, 27 years old and the 20–34 years age group occupies 26,4% of the population that constitutes a strong point for supporting of city development⁶. Shkodër and Lleida own natural resources and with implementation of appropriate strategies for economic development they can significantly affect the improvement of life of city residents. Under the influence of appropriate physical and geographical conditions both these early settlements may be based mostly on the development of agribusiness and tourism which will employ a good part of the active force.

For Shkodër it would also provide one of the main ways to reduce the rate of migration as well as unemployment. Beyond the geographical, historical and rich cultural heritage including the host traditions of the two cities, gives special and distinctive attractive features to the people of these areas. The main concern for Shkodër remains the elaboration of proper policies to enable the control of immigrant movements. The newly arrived need supportive policies in order to decrease the unemployment rate, improve their housing conditions and take appropriate social assistance.

5. Conclusions

1. Immigration should be treated as a priority for local government authorities in their development strategies as the immigration is associated with different social problems in places where newcomers settle.

2. In Spain since 1994 operates National Integration Forum with specific tasks in elaboration of policies related to the inclusion of immigrants. Meanwhile in Albania since 2004 is approved the National Strategy for Migration aiming the implementation of more comprehensive policies for integrated management of migration.

3. Population movements in space are a result of an unequal distribution of resources and capital. If the directions and development priorities per each area would be according to their own potentials, then the negative consequences of chaotic migration would be lower.

⁶ *Strategic Plan for...* (2002).

4. Both analyzed areas (Lleida and Shkodër) have many strong points related to their geographical position, natural resources, rich cultural heritage and a young average age of the population. Key development potentials are based on the development of agribusiness and tourism. The possibility of creating new jobs mainly in these areas will contribute to easily include and integrate the newcomers.

5. Better use of opportunities for seasonal temporary employment, compare to the permanent migration, would be a good solution which would bring more benefits for not only countries of origin and destination, but also for the migrants themselves.

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PROBLEMATYKA RUCHÓW MIGRACYJNYCH W MIASTACH SZKODRA W ALBANI I LLEIDA W HISZPANII. STUDIUM PRZYPADKU

W tym artykule podjęto próbę porównawczego ujęcia elementów migracji w dwóch miastach – Szkodra w Albanii i Lleida w Hiszpanii, kładąc szczególny nacisk na imigrantów już tam obecnych. Analiza ta pozwoliła zidentyfikować zarówno podobieństwa, jak i różnice ruchów migracyjnych i ich konsekwencje w tych miastach.

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