Fertility Decline During Albania's Societal Crisis and its Subsequent Consolidation

Déclin de la fécondité albanaise durant la crise et le redressement économique et politique

Mathias Lerch

Abstract Cross-sectional comparisons of the decline in fertility in former socialist countries point to a bi-phasic response: a crisis-induced family limitation followed by the postponement of childbearing during economic and political consolidation. In this article, the last two decades of Albania's fertility transition are documented. The bi-phasic response model is tested in a period analysis of adaptations in marriage and parity-specific fertility to the socio-economic and political transformations since the fall of communist rule. We find that the timing and patterns of changes in Albanian family behaviours generally adhere to the model. Socio-economic differentials and trends are congruent with the major role played by the crisis and structural change. However, the Albanian case also highlights the enduring importance of traditional family formation models during the crisis, as well as among specific subpopulations more recently. These results are discussed with reference to a sociological account of Albanian society.

Keywords Marriage · Fertility · Crisis · Post-communist transition · Culture · Albania

Résumé La comparaison des tendances de la fécondité dans les pays anciennement socialistes indique une réponse bi-phasique: la crise a induit une limitation des naissances, suivie par un report des naissances durant la période de redressement économique et politique. Dans cet article, nous décrivons la transition de la fécondité albanaise durant les deux dernières décennies. Le modèle de réponse bi-phasique est testé à l'aide d'une analyse transversale relative à l'adaptation des comportements nuptiaux et féconds aux transformations économiques et politiques survenues depuis la chute du régime communiste. Le calendrier et les modalités des

M. Lerch (✉)
Institute of Demographic and Life Course Studies, University of Geneva,
40, Boulevard Pont-d'Arve, 1205 Geneva, Switzerland
e-mail: mathias.lerch@unige.ch

changements de comportements en matière de constitution de la famille en Albanie confirment généralement le modèle. Les différences de comportements entre groupes socioéconomiques, ainsi que leurs tendances, soulignent le rôle majeur de la crise et des changements structurels. Toutefois, le cas de l'Albanie montre la persistance de modèles traditionnels familiaux durant la crise ainsi que plus récemment au sein de certaines sous-populations. Ces résultats sont discutés dans le cadre d'une analyse sociologique de la société albanaise.

1 Introduction

The fall of the socialist regimes in 1989 provoked rapid demographic change in the Eurasian continent. Extensive migration developed in many countries, and the level of fertility dropped at unprecedented rates to worldwide record-low levels. Populations therefore aged at a fast pace, especially in the Western Balkans, where international emigration was very high. If advanced ageing is defined as the proportion of elderly people, relative to the working age population (15–64), exceeding that of children, Croatia and Slovenia were the first countries in the region to enter this stage, at the same time as Western Europe, around 2005. Bosnia-Herzegovina reached this stage in 2011, while Serbia can be expected to do so very soon, followed by Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania before 2030 (United Nations, 2011). Given these realities and prospects for Europe's poorest region, an increased understanding of the causes of fertility decline is crucial to predicting its demographic future.

The lessons drawn from the fertility trends documented in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), as well as in an increasing number of countries of the former Soviet Union, may provide information on the current stage and the future prospects of fertility in other post-socialist countries. Despite cultural and economic differences, cross-sectional comparisons point to a bi-phasic fertility response to the post-socialist transformations. Initial crisis-induced limitations of childbearing at higher parities have been followed by fertility postponement during subsequent economic and political consolidation (Billingsley, 2010). However, little is known about family behaviours in the Western Balkans, despite the fact that the region has been characterised by acute crises, including civil wars, social upheavals and economic depression.

In this regional context, Albanians have experienced very marked social transformations. A society, which in 1990 was mainly rural and completely isolated, has diversified strongly and opened up to the outside world. In this article, we document the rapid collapse of Albanian fertility, starting from Europe's highest level in 1990 (i.e. three children per women) towards sub-replacement levels more recently. We test the bi-phasic model of fertility response through an analysis of the society's reactions in terms of family behaviours to the political, economic and

social transformations of the past two decades. The examination of aggregate trends in marriage and parity-specific fertility aims to answer two main questions. First, did the social upheavals of the 1990s provoke crisis-induced family limitations? Second, has the onset of family formation been postponed during Albania's subsequent economic and political consolidation? The role played by competing factors in fertility change is then investigated through multivariate analysis of marriage and parity progressions.

We start by introducing the two decades of economic and political transition in Albania and then discuss family behaviours in former socialist countries in order to motivate our hypotheses. Following the presentation of the data and methods used for this study, Albania's fertility transition between 1989 and 2007 is then documented based on a range of independent estimates. Marriage and parity progressions are analysed based on survey data, with a focus on period fluctuations and socio-economic differentials and trends. Change in Albanian family behaviours has generally adhered to the bi-phasic response model. Socio-economic differentials and trends are congruent with the major role played by the crisis and structural change. However, the Albanian case also highlights the enduring importance of traditional family formation models during the crisis, as well as among specific subpopulations more recently. These results are discussed with reference to a sociological account of Albanian society.

2 The Albanian Context

Albania is a small country neighbouring Greece, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Italy across the Adriatic sea. After the establishment of the communist rule in 1944, Albania's mainly rural population lived in complete autarchy for several decades under Enver Hoxha's totalitarian regime. The onset of the first demographic transition was late by European standards. Although mortality probably started to decline in the 1930s, the onset of fertility transition did not occur before the 1960s, starting from a total fertility rate (TFR) of 6.8 (Falkingham and Gjonca, 2001). With a yearly demographic growth rate of 2.4 % since the Second World War, the country's population of 3.2 millions in 1989 was not only very young (Meski & Iaquinta, 1991), but also among the poorest in the European continent. Two-thirds were working in agriculture with minimal machinery, and urban households were poorly provided with sanitation infrastructure (Central Directory of Statistics, 1991; see Table 1).

Having been denied the right to move internally or abroad, thousands of young people, dissatisfied with harsh living conditions and slow reforms, invaded western embassies in the capital, Tirana, in July 1990 and were granted asylum in Europe. This first paroxysm of social upheaval was characterised by an anarchic context: inflation reached 200 %, food was scarce because of a drought as well as strikes in cooperatives and public riots destroyed governmental buildings and productive infrastructures. Within 2 years, nearly 10 % of the population had illegally crossed the borders into Greece and Italy (INSTAT, 1999), and a large rural exodus was initiated. After the ruling Socialist Party won the first multiparty parliamentary

Table 1 Socio-economic indicators of Albania, 1989, 2001, 2008

	1989	2001/02	2008
Population	3,182,417	3,069,275	3,170,000
% Urban	35.7	42.2	50.0
Numbers of cars	Few	133,533	264,828
GDP per capita (current international dollars PPP)	2,850	4,371	7,293
Remittances in % of GDP	20	15	10
Income poverty (headcount %)			
Total	–	25.4	12.4
Urban	–	19.5	10.1
Rural	–	29.6	14.6
Gini coefficient of income	–	0.28	0.41
Non-income dimensions of poverty (%)			
Toilet inside, urban dwellings	66.5	87.6	96.7
Toilet inside, rural dwellings	22.0	28.1	68.7
Piped water inside, urban dwellings	63.6	86.2	94.2
Piped water inside, rural dwellings	5.0	15.5	44.3
Unemployment rate %			
Urban	13.2	26.1	(Total) 13.8
Gross school enrolment (%)			
Secondary level	78.5	44.9	70.6
Tertiary level	6.6	17.0	19.0

Source population censuses 1989 and 2001, LSMS 2002, 2008, LFS 2009, Transmonee 2010 database, INSTAT (2004c); INSTAT (2004b); World Bank (2005); de Zwager et al. (2005)

election in 1991, generalised strikes led to the collapse of the production system. In the spring of 1992, elections were held again, and the opposition (Democratic Party) finally won. Meanwhile, the population became dependent on international food aid through the following summer (Vickers & Pettifer, 2000).

The Albanian economy is among the few to have experienced rapid recovery from 1993 onwards. As industrial production had been virtually interrupted and land had been redistributed on a per capita basis, youth employment in the agricultural sector increased alongside total output, even though the small farm plots often did not ensure the self-sufficiency of poor families (UNDP, 2000). A large share of the economic growth can, in fact, be attributed to migrant remittances which represented up to 20 % of gross domestic product (GDP) during the 1990s and significantly alleviated poverty (de Zwager et al., 2005). Insecurity also continued to prevail throughout the country because of the rise in organised crime, the murders of political party representatives and disputes between new and former landowners (Vickers & Pettifer, 2000).

The second paroxysm of the Albanian crisis occurred when illegal pyramidal investment schemes collapsed in 1996–97 (Korovilas, 1999). A large proportion of households and emigrants lost their savings, and remittance flows temporarily dropped. The economic crisis brought on a political one. The government was

widely criticised for its nepotism and, more specifically, for its management of the crisis. These contestations resulted in civil turmoil and led to a state of emergency when weapons were stolen from the arsenal of Tirana. The international community intervened militarily in 1998 in order to prevent a civil war (Vickers & Pettifer, 2000). Furthermore, the international embargo against war-torn Serbia, as well as the Kosovo conflict on the northern border in 1998–99, exacerbated the crisis and contributed to the escalation of organised crime networks (Bideleux & Jeffries, 2007).

By the end of the first decade of transition, living conditions were still difficult. Despite large inflows of remittances, one in four Albanian households remained poor in 2002. Income inequality appeared moderate—with a Gini index below 30 %—but mainly reflected differences in household wealth rather than regional economic disparities (INSTAT, 2004a). Although urban areas experienced significant improvements in sanitary infrastructure, rural dwellings remained poorly equipped. In a context of high unemployment and underemployment, there was a scarcity of opportunities to meet basic needs and overcome financial constraints. According to the Albanian Census of 2001, unemployment rates had doubled since 1989 to reach 26 % in urban areas, and the situation was particularly difficult for young people. Married women with children had the greatest difficulty in finding jobs. They faced higher general unemployment rates than men (with a 10-point difference in cities) and were overrepresented among the discouraged jobless (INSTAT, 2004b). Consequently, they retreated massively from the labour market.

Social development also stalled during the 1990s. Following extraordinary success in schooling during communism, gross enrolment in secondary education[1] declined significantly, from 79 % to less than 44 % (World Bank, 2005). With many public facilities destroyed during the two civil riots, the proximity and quality of secondary schools became an impediment to education (Hazans & Trapeznikova, 2006). Schooling has also not been considered to be an effective means of escaping from poverty when compared with emigration or local employment opportunities (DeSoto et al., 2002). Inequality in individual educational attainment in fact stemmed from differences in family endowments, with the poor having less access to secondary levels (INSTAT, 2004c; Picard & Wolff, 2010). Girls were particularly disadvantaged in rural areas when they were firstborn or competing with several brothers (Hazans & Trapeznikova, 2006).

Compared with the 1990s, the second transition decade has been characterised by significant improvements in many aspects of life. The economy recovered quickly following the financial crisis, with GDP growing continuously until recently at an average annual rate of 7 % (World Bank, 2007). At the same time, income inequality increased, with a Gini index of 40 % in 2008, but the proportion of Albanians in poverty fell by half to 12 % (INSTAT et al., 2009). The disparity in sanitary equipment between urban and rural areas also started to decrease. Unemployment declined to 14 % in 2009 but remains high among young people (INSTAT, website). Secondary school enrolment has only recently started to

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[1] The gross enrolment ratio is defined as the total rate of enrolment in a specific level of education relative to the official school-age population of that level.

recover, whereas tertiary enrolment has increased continuously from 7 % in 1989 to 19 % in 2008 (Gabhadino et al., 2010; World Bank, 2005). New opportunities for young people have indeed emerged in the context of a diversifying labour market, with a 2.5-fold expansion in the tertiary sector, which contributed to 58 % of GDP in 2008 (INSTAT, website).

Alongside this recent stabilisation of the socio-economic situation, the country has also consolidated politically. Negotiations started with the European Union (EU) in 2003 for the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, and Albania became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and applied for status as an EU candidate country in 2009. These changes, sustained by strong transnational ties between half of Albanian households and their emigrated family members over the past two decades (Carletto et al., 2006), have contributed to the rapid modernisation of Albanian society. The increase in urbanisation from a level of 36 % in 1989 to more than 50 % today testifies to this evolution, as does the diffusion of car ownership (which was forbidden under communist rule), of Western fashions and of consumerism throughout the country.

3 Fertility Decline in Former Socialist Countries and the Hypothesis of a Bi-phasic Response in Albania

Similar socio-economic transformations to those found in Albania have been observed throughout the post-socialist era. Political systems collapsed first, and countries experienced a structural caesura, marked by institutional instability and economic crisis. Material hardship and unemployment increased in the face of sharply declining wage levels and social transfers. Later on, the political situation stabilised and economies were restructured, leading ultimately to economic growth and the countries' integration into world trade and politics (Philipov & Dorbritz, 2003). In Albania, these four phases can be collapsed into two when distinguishing the first decade of economic and political crisis from the subsequent years of consolidation since 2000. During these transformations, the TFR fell sharply in all the countries concerned. Couples had to adapt their family behaviours to the increasing direct and indirect costs of childbearing, which were caused by higher living costs, diversified and competitive labour markets and new freedoms leading to the rise of individualism and leisure activities (Frejka, 2008).

However, birth order components of the fertility decline have varied across countries. Cross-sectional comparisons reveal two general patterns. In CEE, the postponement of first births resulted in falls in the TFR to lowest-low levels during the 1990s (Sobotka, 2004), although some countries have recently experienced a partial recovery because births have been recuperated at older ages (Potancokova et al., 2008; Sobotka et al., 2008). In contrast to this trend, fertility decline in southeastern Europe, Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia resulted mainly from birth limitation at higher parities (i.e. a fertility stopping behaviour; Sardon, 2000; Sobotka, 2003). A recent rebound in the TFR has also been observed in Central Asia (Spoorenberg, forthcoming). In an intermediate group composed of the Baltic

countries, Bulgaria, and Romania, an initial family limitation followed by fertility postponement drove the fertility decline (Billingsley, 2010).

This contrast in patterns of fertility change arose to some extent from differences in the progress achieved in national fertility transitions up to 1989. The two-child family model was already diffused in CEE, while the TFRs in Central Asia and in the Albanian-speaking countries of the Western Balkans remained near or significantly above three children. However, in Russia and in most countries of the Caucasus and southeastern Europe—which were hardest hit by the crisis and featured lowest-low fertility levels as well—people continued to marry at a young age, and entry into motherhood remained universal until recently (Sardon, 2000; Sobotka, 2003). A time-series analysis of age-specific birth rates for 25 countries has shown how the predominance of a stopping versus a postponement pattern was related to the extent of the economic crisis: "Postponement was linked to improvements in the economic context, whereas stopping behaviour was related to worsening economic conditions" (Billingsley 2010, p. 27). The main question investigated in this article is therefore whether a bi-phasic model of fertility responses corresponds to the bi-phasic socio-economic change observed in Albania since 1989.

According to this model, the main drop in fertility at higher parities should have occurred during the two paroxysms of economic crisis and social upheaval (in 1991–92 and 1996–98). The expected stopping behaviour related to economic hardship would be confirmed by a decline in parity progressions without a shift in the timing of births. Since a positive income effect is expected, the drop in childbearing should have concerned larger families to a greater extent, because they already faced higher costs of childrearing. In other words, it should be positively correlated with parity. However, Albanian marriages may be less prone to the income effect because of patrilocal residence rules which mean that young couples are not necessarily required to be financially autonomous.

Social and psychological uncertainty exacerbated economic hardship in former socialist countries during the crisis. The disappearance of the totalitarian regimes left a cultural and societal vacuum, while a new civil society and the market economy were still only emerging. In the absence of recognised institutions, rules, or widely accepted norms—a state referred to as social anomie—there was an increasing sense of disorientation in family formation decisions (Philipov, 2002). Postponement of family events was to be expected as people adopted cautious behaviour when facing difficulties in evaluating and managing the probable consequences of "life-defining events such as childbirth" (Rodin 2011, p. 228). Given Albania's social and political transformations in a regional context of civil wars, uncertainty may have temporarily depressed union formation and marital fertility. In this case, unlike the case for income effects, family events would have been postponed in the 1990s.

However, parity-specific fertility trends in countries which experienced acute social upheavals do not systematically confirm the effect of economic crisis and uncertainty. In Armenia, the rates of second births remained constant (Billingsley, 2011a), and in Tajikistan, fertility decline halted during the civil war. It was the subsequent food crisis that depressed the occurrence of all family events, but

childbearing at higher parities rebounded later on (Clifford et al., 2009). More prominently, entry into motherhood was often contra-cyclical to crisis symptoms. Russian women who were affected by unemployment in the early 1990s had higher fertility compared with those who were not; a paradox explained by the importance of starting a family in reducing uncertainty about one's future life course (Kohler & Kohler, 2002). In Central Asia, the revival of religious traditions has been advanced to account for earlier marriages during the period immediately before and after the fall of the communist regimes (Dommaraju & Agadjanian, 2008), while in rural Mongolia, constraints to early union formation may have been leveraged by the tradition of transferring wealth at birth (Spoorenberg, 2009).

These accounts underline the importance of cultural and social contexts in individual demographic responses to the post-socialist crisis. Gal and Kligman (2000) and others have indeed argued that as a result of the economic downturn in the later years of socialism, individuals increasingly distinguished their idealised private spheres—where the family unit struggled for economic survival—from the distrusted public sphere represented by the Socialist Party and the nation of workers. If the fall of regimes primarily affected the public sphere, traditional family structures remained the main source of livelihood, and represented continuity with the past.

In Albania, individual family behaviours may have not responded to crisis symptoms because the collapse of state authority and regulation during the 1990s led to the re-establishment of old customary laws (the *Kanun*) in some regions (Fisher, 1999), and generally increased the family's role as a major social safety net (INSTAT, 2005). Revival of the traditions of a patriarchal society also affected women's freedom. They complained of the "destructive power of public opinion" and gossip (Pritchett-Post 1998, p. 236), and many were withdrawn from school for security reasons or to avoid the risk of potential love affairs while waiting for an early, and often arranged, marriage. Although we are unable to test different pathways of institutional influences, their relevance may be indicated by a continuing trend in marital fertility and, particularly, in early marriages, despite the context of economic hardship and uncertainty in the 1990s. Family formation has indeed been shown to be more subject to normative pressures and behavioural control than fertility at higher parities (Billari et al., 2009).

According to the bi-phasic model of fertility responses, the postponement of marriage and of motherhood was to be expected by the start of the second decade of the Albanian transition. Rise in age at first birth was indeed more marked in countries where the economic context significantly improved, wage levels decreased less and enrolment in tertiary education increased the most (Billingsley, 2010; Sobotka, 2003). Delayed onset of childbearing is therefore commonly associated with structural transformation in the labour market and with ideational change in society. With the emergence of new economic opportunities, individuals are required to adjust their skills in order to take advantage of them. Longer educational enrolment postpones family events, and higher attainment increases the opportunity costs of childbearing. This behavioural innovation can then be expected to diffuse in society through social interaction (Kohler et al., 2002).

Political and economic stability also enhances ideational changes in the family sphere. As the former socialist societies in Europe have been strongly West-orientated

since 1990, Thornton and Philipov (2007) have suggested that there is a(re-) embracement of so-called "development idealism"—a system of beliefs and values favouring the Western family model as a means to attaining a modern society. In the same vein, Lesthaeghe and Surkyn (2002) expected the individualisation character- istic of Western society, changing values of children and parenthood, and gender equality to diffuse into Eastern Europe and to cause the onset of the second demographic transition. However, signs of this second transition, involving diversi- fication of life courses and living arrangements, were rare at the end of the 1990s. Although societies that underwent a successful economic transition tended to embrace more self-expressive values (Inglehart & Baker, 2000), fertility postponement still mainly characterised the better educated and urban populations, and markers of the second demographic transition failed to account for this trend (Sobotka 2008).

Albania ranked last among the former socialist countries in the 2009 Social Institution and Gender Index.[2] Compared with the past, women still face difficulties in accessing secure positions in the labour market and are poorly represented in parliament (7 % in 2005 against 32 % in 1990; INSTAT, 2007). Their decision- making power within the couple increases with age and the first birth, meaning that marriage and motherhood remain important for a woman's social status. Pre-marital sex and cohabitation are very rare (INSTAT et al., 2010). Women have not only been suspicious of new living arrangements because of the rise in human trafficking, but also value marriage and family highly as their "main focus of life" (Murzaku & Dervishi, 2003). Moreover, the proportion using modern means of contraception is low (24 % in 2008–09) despite the fact that the majority of the population is aware of them and that contraception has been accessible and free since 1996 (USAID, 2007). In this context, postponement of marriages and motherhood will have been driven mainly by structural transformations in the labour market rather than by ideational change, for which there is only weak evidence.

The competing factors of fertility change did not affect post-socialist society homogeneously. In addition to the timing and patterns of fertility decline, socio- economic differentials provide further information on the respective role of each factor. Following the end of state planning, inhabitants in cities were exposed to a more significant increase in the costs of childraising than those in the countryside. Not only are price levels higher in urban contexts, but rural households could, at least in part, rely on subsistence farming to cope with the end of the free distribution of food. It follows that income effects will have been sharper in cities, leading to a more marked decline in childbearing in the city setting than in the countryside. Given the traditionally large difference in family sizes between urban and rural Albania (see Sect. 5), the comparison should focus on the first and second births. The role of uncertainty during the crisis, by contrast, would be evinced by the absence of variation in the postponement of marriage and births according to place of residence, as social anomie and insecurity were generalised throughout the country. However, institutional influences are likely to be more intense in rural

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[2] This OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) index focuses on the root causes behind gender inequalities and is based on 12 social institutional variables characterising the family code, women's physical integrity, preferences for a son, civil liberties and ownership rights (see http://genderindex.org/methodology).

areas, where traditional social structures exert more authority. Crisis symptoms might be expected to be offset there to a larger extent, leading to earlier marriages and higher levels of childbearing when compared with cities.

During the subsequent period of economic and political consolidation, we would expect marriage and birth postponement to be a mainly urban phenomenon, because structural change essentially concerned the labour markets of cities. Compared with the countryside, local opportunities for education and work are more developed there, as are the opportunities to move abroad.

Since education increases the probability of employment and income, it constitutes a main factor for escaping poverty during the crisis. If income effects are at work, higher-educated women should be subject to fewer financial constraints on traditional family formation. Compared with the lower skilled, the higher-educated may exemplify not only an earlier entry into motherhood, as observed in Poland (Kotowska et al., 2008), but also a higher progression towards second births, as encountered in Russia (Gerber & Berman, 2010) and Armenia (Billingsley, 2011b). Institutional influences, by contrast, leave less room for individual choice and may eliminate educational differentials in marital fertility and especially in marriage.

During the following decade, the role of ideational change in challenging the moral primacy of traditional social institutions would be evinced by increasing differentiation in family behaviours according to educational attainment which empowers women, rather than according to the place of residence. Unlike in the crisis decade, higher education should now postpone entry into motherhood and be associated with a larger decline in second births, as observed during consolidation phases in other countries (Billingsley, 2011a; Muresan & Hoem, 2010; Sobotka et al., 2008). However, the predominance of structural effects would be confirmed by a more marked postponement of marriages and motherhood among higher-educated women living in cities, because they were offered more opportunities in the labour market and so faced higher opportunity costs of childbearing.

4 Data and Methods

The bi-phasic model of responses to socio-economic change at the contextual level is tested from a period perspective. Given the absence of annual estimates of women by age and parity, we estimate national trends in family formation and enlargement indirectly from 5,697 and 7,584 retrospective birth histories, collected respectively in 2002 by the reproductive health survey (RHS) and in 2008–09 by the demographic and health survey (DHS).[3] Synthetic parity progression ratios (SPPRs) are estimated for the years 1988–2007 (Feeney & Yu, 1987; Henry, 1952; Hinde,

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[3] These two independent samples of women of childbearing ages are representative at the national and urban/rural levels. Respondents were selected within households sampled according to a classic stratified multistage design. The non-response rate was less than 7% (for more information, see Morris et al., 2005 and INSTAT et al., 2010). Both surveys were implemented by the Albanian Institutes of Statistics and Public Health with technical support from the centres for disease control and prevention and macro international, respectively. They represent the main information source on family planning and fertility issues in Albania.

1998; Ni-Bhrolchain, 1987). Similar to death rates which are conditional on the number of years of exposure since birth, parity progression rates (q_x) are conditional on the time x elapsed since the woman's previous birth or marriage (for progressions to the first birth). This duration-specific probability of progressing from one parity to the next is obtained by dividing the number of women who had their ($j + 1$)th birth during the reference period after x cohort years of exposure since their (j)th birth by the total number of women who had a (j)th birth x years ago but who had not progressed further by the start of the period. Assuming an upper limit of birth intervals, the conditional period probabilities q_x are cumulated as in a life table from the first cohort year (indicating a birth in the same year as the previous event) to the tenth cohort year to estimate a SPPR (a_j).

$$a_j = 1 - (1 - q_0)(1 - q_1)(1 - q_2)\ldots$$

This measure can be interpreted as the probability of a woman who has a (j)th child giving birth to another child if she ever experienced, during her lifetime, the duration-specific risks observed in the reference period. Parity progression to the first, second, and third births is then computed; the number of higher order births is too limited for robust estimations. The conditional rates of first union (herein called marriage) are cumulated over 29 years starting at age 15.

Synthetic parity progression ratios present several advantages for parity-specific analyses compared with other fertility indicators. First, unlike the incidence-based TFRs by birth order, SPPRs refer to parity-specific exposure cohorts and thus are not biased by the changing parity distribution of women during periods of fertility change. Second, exposure is counted backwards in SPPRs rather than forwards as in period parity progression ratios based on age-specific fertility tables. The results are therefore more up-to-date because they include the most recent estimates of the usually larger progression rates found at lower durations of exposure. This is particularly important in former socialist societies characterised by an early entry into motherhood and a compressed period of family enlargement. Further, SPPRs are not affected by the cumulative tempo effect on higher parity progression ratios resulting from the postponement of previous events (as observed in fertility tables, in which women are shifted into older ages, where the progression rates estimated from prior parity cohorts are lower).

The Nelson-Aalen empirical cumulative hazard function estimate of the survivor function is computed for moving left- and right-truncated 3-year synthetic cohorts (Allison, 1995). This smoothing of estimates enables a focus on period trends net of the noise implied by sampling fluctuations. Next, 95 % confidence intervals are computed to ascertain the statistical significance of period differences. The results are based on weighted observations using survey weights to account for the differential sampling designs of the RHS and DHS. The RHS is used to cover the period 1988–2001, and the DHS provides estimates for 1994–2007. The use of both samples aims to limit uncertainty in information on Albanian fertility, which is discussed more in detail in the following section through a confrontation of different independent estimates of the TFR. Table 2 presents the number of women at risk and the number of events for selected 3-year synthetic cohorts indexed by the central year.

Table 2 Number of women (aged 15–44) at risk and number of family events, selected 3-years synthetic cohorts, 1988–2007

	Central year of synthetic cohort				
	1989	1995	2000	2004	2006
Marriage					
At risk population	2,141	1,922	1,776	2,078	2,548
N events	668	616	438	333	351
1st Birth					
At risk population	976	967	722	586	586
N events	590	642	453	340	311
2nd Birth					
At risk population	1,050	1,404	1,195	952	859
N events	400	616	528	376	307
3rd Birth					
At risk population	673	1474	1,856	1,646	1,516
N events	147	273	382	247	192

Source RHS 2002 and DHS 2008/9

The analysis of aggregate trends in family behaviours aims to assess the timing and patterns of fertility change in Albania. The expected drop in marriage and subsequent births is measured by the SPPR, while the postponement of events is described by the standardised mean age at marriage and the average birth interval (conditional on occurrence until the mentioned age and duration limits). Comparative trends in first quartile ages not only document heterogeneity in timing, but should also be more sensitive to the influences of traditional social institutions which promote early marriage and fertility, and which thus particularly affect progression rates at lower durations of exposure.

The importance of competing factors of behavioural change is deduced by a socio-economic analysis of marriage and family enlargement. Socio-economic differences are tested through multivariate discrete-time logistic regressions which estimate the log-odds of marriage and of having a first, second and third birth (Allison, 1995). Events and person-months at risk between 1989 and 1999 are estimated based on women born between 1955 and 1984, interviewed during the RHS, whereas estimates for the years 2000–07 are based on the birth cohorts of 1966–92 from the DHS sample. Exposure time to marriage and parity progression are measured, respectively, from age 15 on and after the previous event; exposure starting before the beginning of the observation period is left-censored by that date (i.e. 1989 or 2000). Additionally, exposure is right-censored at age 35, after 10 years have elapsed since the previous birth (for parity progressions) or by the end of the observation period (1999 or 2007). Survey weightings are also applied.

The piece-wise constant effect of time-varying age or duration since the previous event is controlled for in the model. The analytical focus is on period trends in distinguishing the years of political and economic consolidation from the first crisis decade (i.e. 2000–07 versus 1989–99) and on the differences between the four

socio-economic groups defined according to the place of residence (urban/rural) and educational attainment (post-compulsory secondary versus a lower level). Using information on the year and month of the last change of residence and on the current and prior urban status, place of residence is allowed to vary over time to account for the steep rise in the rate of urbanisation. This enables women's appropriate child-cost environment to be identified at each duration spell. In the model of marriage and first birth, time-varying educational enrolment and attainment is imputed to eliminate the problem of anticipatory analysis and to control for the low risk of family formation during education (Hoem & Kreyenfeld, 2006; Zabel, 2009). Based on information on the highest educational level and grade (of that level) completed, a normative Albanian secondary educational career is assumed, which starts after an 8-year primary school at age 15 or 16 (depending on the month of birth).[4] Women are considered to be enroled continuously until the highest grade they attended in secondary school. Secondary education is considered to be completed in August of the year women are supposed to have completed school (i.e. after the fourth academic year for those who do not continue into higher education, and after the fifth academic year for those who do).[5] In the models of higher order births, educational attainment at survey date is used.

Two models are specified for each event of interest (i.e. marriage and first, second, and third births). The first model indirectly standardises the general period trend for compositional effects of the exposure population and provides a test of the socio-economic differentials with reference to low-skilled women in rural areas. In the second model, the interaction effects between the period dummy and socio-economic group are introduced to document socio-economic variations in period trends.[6] The independent effects of the socio-economic group then indicate behavioural differences during the first (crisis) decade. The results are presented in terms of odds ratios (i.e. exponentials of the log-odds).

5 Fertility and Family Behaviours During Albania's Transition

Before turning to our parity-specific analysis, an introductory note is now due on Albania's fertility transition which was atypical compared with the rest of the European continent. The national transition was delayed by at least 15 years and

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[4] Albania's educational system contains three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary. Compulsory school of 8 years lasts until age 15, followed by a 4-year vocational training or a 4–5 year secondary general school (which can be complemented, respectively, by a 3-year technical school or university degree).

[5] Although anticipatory analysis persists regarding tertiary education, we do not control for enrolment in and attainment of that level for the following reasons: not only does tertiary school attendance correlate with urban status, but our assumption of continued enrolment from age 15 up to the level attained may be violated. Part-time education is common at that level in Albania, and the transition context motivated many people to adjust their higher-level education after spells out of school.

[6] Besides the test of statistical significance of period trends and socio-economic differences, the improvement in the model's fit to the data is compared with that of a reference model excluding period trends and interaction effects. The Bayesian information criterion (BIC) is used which is based on the log-likelihood test, and additionally accounts for the number of events and for the increasing complexity of the model.

followed a different path (Sardon, 2000). The TFR declined from 6.8 in 1965 to 3 in 1990 in spite of a pro-natalist environment. Compulsory female participation in the labour force and women's role as housekeepers in a patriarchal society implied high burdens. When combined with significant progress in child health, these led couples to decide to have fewer births. Another principal factor was the spectacular increase in female education (Falkingham & Gjonca, 2001). Since women holding a post-compulsory diploma had a completed fertility close to the replacement level for several decades, the national fertility transition was driven by both the spread of education among successive birth cohorts and the declining number of children born to women who remained poorly skilled (Lerch et al., 2010). This explains why fertility decline between 1979 and 1989 occurred mainly in rural areas—from a TFR of 4.9 to 3.5 versus a constant 2.6 in cities—and resulted essentially from lower childbearing within marriage (Dumani, 1995). At the same time, entry into motherhood remained universal and occurred early in women's lives, without important changes in the average age at the event between 1950 and 1989 (24.3 years; Falkingham & Gjonca, 2001).

The average number of children per woman continued to fall during the economic and political transition. It was 2.3 in the 12 months preceding the Albanian Census 2001 and reached half the pre-transitional level in 2006–09 (i.e. 1.6; Lerch et al., 2010). However, exactly what happened is unknown (see Fig. 1). Official data based on vital statistics indicate an initial drop from a TFR of 3 to 2.6 in 1993 and a steep decline from 1996 to replacement and sub-replacement (1.4) levels in 1999 and 2004, respectively. Estimates from retrospective birth histories of the RHS and the DHS indicate a higher level for 1994–96 (3.2 children per women) and a later completion of the fertility transition after 2001. We provide a third indirect estimation for the 1990s using the own-children method applied to data from the Census 2001 (Cho et al., 1986).[7] This indirect estimation is situated between official figures and survey estimates and confirms the declining fertility trend during the 1990s.

Fertility is underestimated by official sources which have been affected not only by the under-registration of births since 1991 but also by the difficulty of estimating the at-risk population. Annual reporting of the number of women in the population register is not disaggregated by age, and the estimation method used by the Albanian Institute of Statistics—i.e. post-Census projections—may overestimate the female population in a context of large-scale emigration (Lerch & Wanner, 2008). The smaller difference between the official statistics and indirect estimations for the 2000s may, in turn, indicate improvements in birth reporting (all districts do now report, for example).

Given the high level of literacy of Albanians, indirect estimations from retrospective birth histories and the census should not be plagued by the omission of events or by event or age misreporting. Under-enumeration of children in the census should also not affect the results significantly because the number of infants was

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[7] Individual records of children aged less than 10 years are matched to married mothers residing in the same family nucleus to obtain the age of the mother at birth. Number of births by age of mother and number of women by age are then estimated for the 1990s through reverse-survival of the children and women enumerated at the census.
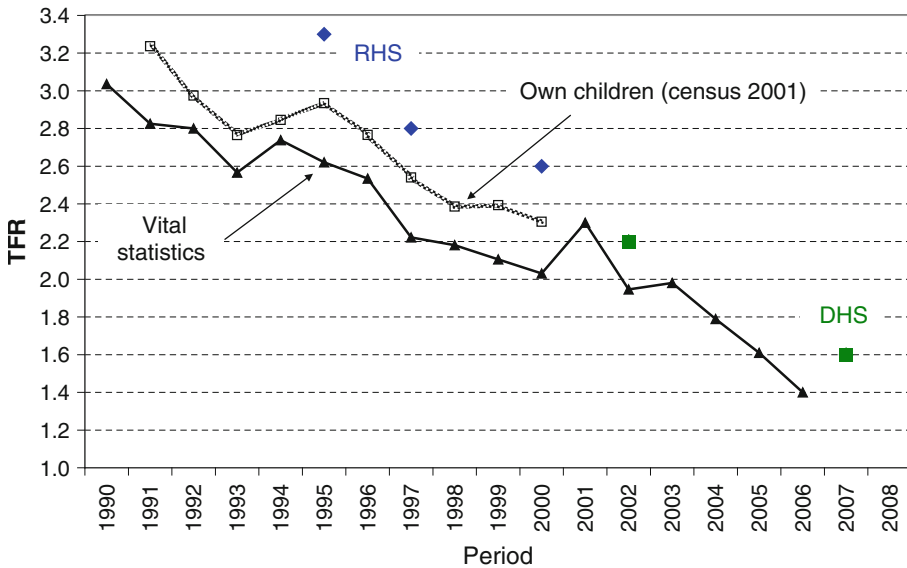
Fig. 1 Total fertility rate according to different sources, Albania 1990–2008. *Sources* INSTAT, RHS 2002 (Morris et al., 2005), DHS 2008/9 (INSTAT et al., 2010), author's estimation from the 2001 Census. *Note* Own children estimates refer to periods between 1 April and 31 March

higher than the number of births reported by vital statistics for the 12 months preceding enumeration (Lerch and Wanner, 2008).[8] Compared with these usual biases, selection bias is probably much more important, given that after the high levels of emigration experienced since 1990, only remaining people were enumerated or interviewed. However, the direction of this bias may change with the evolution in migrant selectivity over the migration process.

In the initial years of transition, permanent emigration concerned mainly men and higher-skilled populations. Female migrants may have postponed births prior to departure in order to facilitate mobility, and may have had lower fertility intentions. Although referring to cohorts born in the 1950s, fertility estimates for immigrants enumerated in the Greek Census 2001 do not indicate a selection of women according to age at entry into motherhood but do confirm a lower fertility (Bagavos et al., 2008). In the past decade, by contrast, opportunities to emigrate have diffused to poor and low-skilled populations. As illegal migrants progressively regularised their situations abroad, family motives for migration became dominant, and the proportion of women increased markedly. Emigration may have thus become less selective, with a greater representation of those women marrying early and having large families. An analysis of the 2003 immigrant cohort in Italy does confirm a strong arrival effect on first birth, which is congruent with family motives for migration, as well as a higher TFR compared with residents in Albania (i.e. 2.75 in

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[8] Estimates based on the own-children method may also be biased due to uncertainty in mortality estimates. However, the age displacement of births arising from the false linkage of children to women who are not their biological mothers should be limited given the use of family nucleus identifiers.

2005; Mussino & Strozza, 2012). The same is observed among recent immigrants in Greece in 2005 (the TFR was 2.5; Tsimbos, 2008).

In other words, the indirect estimations from Albanian survey and census data may overestimate the level of fertility during the 1990s, when higher-skilled women left the country to a larger extent, but should be less biased for the past decade, which is characterised by a less selective emigration; fertility may even be underestimated. Despite the different levels obtained from different sources, we can conclude that the declining trend is confirmed.

In 2002, birth limitation at higher parities was indeed widespread among women interviewed during the living standards measurement survey (LSMS), but entry into motherhood remained early and universal until the end of the 1990s (Gjonca et al., 2009). However, the census-based period parity progression ratio to the first birth was only 86 % in 2000–01 despite the fact that the mean age at the event remained constant compared with a decade earlier (i.e. 24.5 years; Falkingham & Gjonca, 2001; Lerch et al., 2010). This combination of lower intensity but stable timing points to a quantum rather than a tempo-induced decline in motherhood or marriage, which, in Albania, are traditionally linked and occur close together in time.

In the past decade, fertility has fallen rapidly to one child per woman in Tirana and to 1.3 in other urban areas in 2006–09 (INSTAT et al., 2010). While such low levels have been reached without postponement in some post-communist countries, in Albania, postponement of births may have become widespread.

5.1 National Trends in Marriage and Parity-Specific Fertility

The analysis of marriage and parity-specific fertility starts in 1989 before the first paroxysm of social upheaval that accompanied the fall of the communist system in 1991. Figure 2 illustrates the national trends up to 2006. Rates are plotted on the left-hand side and the timing of events on the right-hand side; the fine lines indicate 95 % confidence intervals. The results from the two independent survey samples converge for overlapping years, indicating a limited selection of respondents to the DHS because of emigration in the 2000s.

Two main features of the final stage in Albania's fertility transition can be highlighted. First, during most of the 1990s, marriage remained near universal, and transition to the second birth was still the norm. Although the RHS survey may overestimate fertility at higher parities in the early 1990s, results for lower parities are in line with independent estimates.[9] Thus, the decline in fertility during the crisis decade resulted primarily from lower levels of childbearing at higher parities, as evidenced by the sharp fall in third births. Birth intervals remained constant, which points to stopping behaviour.

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[9] The product of the synthetic progression ratios to marriage and the first birth, as well as the sum of the average age and duration at the events, converge for 1990 and 2000–01 with the results based, respectively, on vital statistics (Falkingham and Gjonca, 2001) and on the census (Lerch et al., 2010). Further, the constant rates of second births during the 1990s are in line with the trend in period parity progressions estimated from vital statistics for 1990 and from the 2001 census (i.e. rates remained above 60 %).
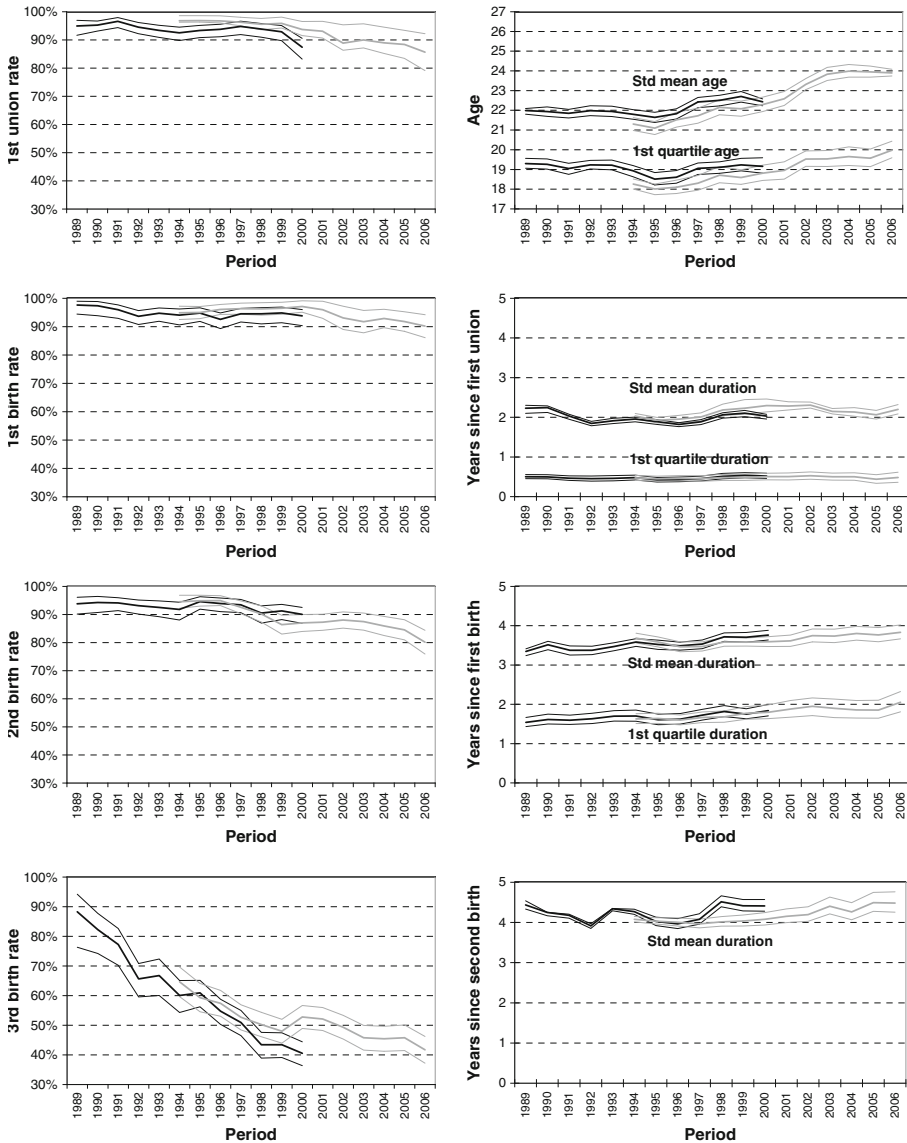
Fig. 2 Synthetic parity progression ratios (*left-hand side*) and standardised mean and first quartile ages (*right-hand side*), Albanian women 1989–2006. *Sources* RHS 2002 (for 1989–2001) and DHS 2008/9 (for 1994–2006). *Fine lines* indicate 95 % confidence intervals

Birth limitation was the strongest and statistically significant in the respective years following the onset of the two political and economic crises. The rate of third births dropped from almost 90 to 65 % in 1992–93, whereas second and first births remained surprisingly unaffected. Trends in the timing of marriage even indicate a short-lived tendency to marry earlier in the mid-1990s. This is particularly the case

among younger women, as evidenced by the statistically significant drop in the first quartile age. A similar temporary trend towards early entry into motherhood was observed among women interviewed by the LSMS (Gjonca et al., 2009).

During the subsequent financial crisis, the amplitude of the fall in childbearing was more correlated with parity: rates of third births, again, dropped significantly in 1997 (by more than ten points), and the rate of second births initiated a statistically significant decline in 1998. However, first birth was still universal among married women. Unlike in 1992–93, Albanians also responded to the second social upheaval through changes in marriage patterns. The mean and, to a lesser extent, the first quartile age at marriage significantly increased, to 22.5 and 19 years respectively, at the turn of the new century. This suggests that the previous response of a temporary trend towards early marriage was reversed during the second paroxysm of the Albanian crisis, when family events were postponed. More specifically, the shift back and forth in marriage timing during the 1990s helps to explain the similar mean ages at entry into motherhood in 1990 and 2000–01, as estimated from the vital statistics and the 2001 census respectively.

The second main observation refers to fertility decline at lower parities and to a retreat from universal marriage in the first decade of the new century. The decline in second births intensified, but the rate had not fallen below the 80 % bar by 2006. Rates of marriage and first births fell significantly, to below the 90 % bar. The decline in marriage clearly resulted from a tempo effect, as indicated by the increase in the mean age at the event from 22.5 years to more than 24 years by the end of the observation period. Moreover, heterogeneity in age at marriage has increased since 1989. This is evidenced by the slower upwards trend of the first quartile age compared with the mean: the former only increased by one year to 20 years of age, meaning that a significant proportion of women continued to marry very young.

In a similar way to third births in the 1990s, the more recent fall in first and particularly second births has been due essentially to stopping behaviour, because birth intervals remained constant throughout the observation period. Thus, the one-child family model has started to be diffused in Albania.

5.2 Socio-economic Differentials and Trends

As shown in Table 3, the declines in marriage and parity progressions between 1989–99 and 2000–07 were statistically significant after taking into account compositional effects in a multivariate analysis. Compared with the reference model controlling only for socio-economic differences, the model's fit substantially increased when allowing for the period trend (as evinced by the decline in the BIC). To understand the causes and social diffusion of changes in family behaviours, the focus now turns to socio-economic differentials and trends.

The likelihood of marriage was an inverted U-shaped function of age (Table 3). No clear difference was apparent between urban and rural areas. Enrolment in secondary school was associated with a lower odds ratio in both residence contexts. Educational attainment, however, only mattered in cities: higher-skilled women had a significantly lower odds ratio of marriage, whereas the behaviour of the lower-skilled did not significantly differ from that of their rural counterparts, defined as the

Table 3 Odds ratios of sequential progressions to marriage, first, second and third births according to socio-economic group and period, Albanian women aged 15–34, 1989–1999 and 2000–2007 synthetic cohorts

Variable	First union				First birth				Second birth				Third birth			
	O.R.	S.	O.R.	S.	O.R.	S.	O.R.	S.	O.R.	S.	O.R.	S.	O.R.	S.	O.R.	S.
Age (1st Union) / Duration since previous event (1st Birth) / (2nd & 3rd Birth)																
… / <1 Year (ref) / <2 Years					1.00		1.00		0.28	**	0.28	**	0.32	**	0.32	**
15–19 / 1 Year / 2 Years (ref)	0.37	**	0.37	**	0.36	**	0.36	**	1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00	
20–24 (ref) / 2 Years / 3 Years	1.00		1.00		0.74	**	0.74	**	1.26	**	1.26	**	0.94	ns	0.95	ns
25–29 / 3 Years / 4 Years	1.03	ns	1.02	ns	0.49	**	0.49	**	1.34	**	1.34	**	0.99	ns	1.00	ns
30–34 / >3 Years / >4 Years	0.50	**	0.49	**	0.14	**	0.15	**	0.80	**	0.80	**	0.59	**	0.59	**
Socioeconomic group																
LS rural (ref)	1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00	
ER rural	0.29	**	0.30	**	0.36	**	0.44	**	0.91	ns	0.91	ns	0.81	**	0.85	**
HS rural	0.97	ns	0.98	ns	1.12	ns	1.20	**								
LS urban	1.03	ns	0.90	ns	0.94	ns	1.03	ns								
ER urban	0.25	**	0.27	**	0.61	**	0.74	*	0.78	**	0.74	**	0.58	**	0.49	**
HS urban	0.71	**	0.79	**	1.09	**	1.17	**	0.63	**	0.66	**	0.29	**	0.28	**
Period																
1989–1999 (ref)	1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00	
2000s	0.67	**	0.71	**	0.76	**	0.87	**	0.70	**	0.71	**	0.67	**	0.64	**
Interaction: group & period																
LS rural (ref)			1.00				1.00				1.00				1.00	
ER rural			0.93	ns			0.60	ns								
HS rural			1.00	ns			0.75	*			1.00	ns			0.90	ns
LS urban			1.37	**			0.76	**			1.14	ns			1.44	**

Table 3 continued

Variable	First union				First birth				Second birth				Third birth			
	O.R.	S.	O.R.	S.	O.R.	S.	O.R.	S.	O.R.	S.	O.R.	S.	O.R.	S.	O.R.	S.
ER urban			0.80	ns			0.56	*								
HS urban			0.72	**			0.79	**			0.87	ns			1.05	ns
N person-months without events	334981		334981		67197		67197		147917		147917		225870		225870	
N events	3197		3197		3107		3107		2973		2973		1485		1485	
Differential BIC with model without period and interaction	−105		−90		−41		−13		−77		−58		−59		−44	

Sources RHS 2002, DHS 2009

LS low skilled (at best primary), *HS* high skilled (secondary and more), *ER* enroled in secondary level, *OR* odds ratio, *S* statistical significance

* Stat. sign. at 0.1 level, ** stat. sign. at 0.05 level

reference category. Although the model's fit did not improve when allowing for interaction effects between period and social groups, trends differed significantly. Considering the evidence of the previous section, this result can be interpreted as showing differentials in marriage postponement. Postponement intensified the most among higher skilled city-dwellers, followed by the rural population, who experienced similar changes across educational strata. Compared with the reference trend observed among the low-skilled rural population, the delay in marriage was, surprisingly, least pronounced among low-skilled city dwellers. Heterogeneity in marriage patterns consequently increased in cities.

The highest odds ratios of having a first birth were observed either in the same year as marriage or 2 years later. In a similar way to marriage, enrolment in secondary school was associated with a very low fertility. However, women who completed the secondary level had higher fertility than the lower-skilled, particularly during the crisis decade. No significant difference in first births between urban and rural areas was observed. Although taking account of interaction effects did not improve the model's fit, period trends did differ according to socio-economic group, with the decline in first births being the least pronounced among the lower-skilled rural population.

The odds ratios of family enlargement followed a typical inverted U-shaped function of duration since the previous birth. The results for second births confirm a dominant urban/rural gradient with a lower odds ratio in cities, particularly among the higher-skilled population. The decline in childbearing through 2000–07 concerned all socio-economic groups to the same extent, meaning that the onset of the diffusion of the one-child family model still mainly concerns high-skilled city dwellers. The odds ratio of third births exemplified the clearest socio-economic gradient: the highest level of fertility was found among the low-skilled rural population, followed by their higher-educated counterparts and the low-skilled city-dwellers. High-skilled women in cities exemplified the lowest level of childbearing, which is congruent with their pioneering role in the historical fertility transition in Albania. The declining trend in third births concerned all groups to the same extent, except for the lower-educated urban population, who experienced a less marked fall compared with the reference trend observed in the countryside. This implies that not only marriage behaviour but also family enlargement became increasingly heterogeneous in cities.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

Socio-economic and political change since 1990 in Albania has adhered to a bi-phasic transition model of crisis and consolidation, observed throughout the post-socialist era. In this article, we have documented Albania's sharp fertility decline to approximately half its pre-transitional level. Based on international observations, we postulated that fertility has adapted to the socio-economic and political transformations in two stages. Crisis symptoms were expected to encourage family limitation, whereas structural changes in the labour market, it was supposed, would postpone the onset of family formation during economic and political consolidation.

The results from the descriptive analysis generally conform to the expected timing and patterns of fertility change. The demographic dynamics underlying the decline in the TFR reflected behavioural changes, and did not merely result from a structural effect of rapid urbanisation and the spread of education in Albania. Furthermore, socio-economic differentials and trends were congruent with the main anticipated motives of transformations in family behaviours.

Most of the fertility decline at higher parities lagged behind the onset of the two social upheavals in the 1990s and resulted from stopping behaviour. Women at higher parities, as well as those residing in urban areas, exemplified the most marked birth limitation, confirming the dominance of an income effect. In addition, the earlier first births observed among better-educated married women may reflect their exposure to fewer economic constraints, although Gjonca et al. (2009) have interpreted a similar result as a catch-up of the delay in entry into motherhood caused by time spent at school.

Despite these expected crisis-driven responses, the two-child family model surprisingly persisted until the onset of the financial crisis in 1996. Women also continued to marry young, and a significant number even brought the event forward in the mid-1990s. Although considerable uncertainty exists regarding the level of fertility during this period, because of potential biases due to selective emigration, our retrospective survey estimates are congruent with evidence from other sources. We therefore believe that they are at least representative of those Albanians who did not want or were unable to leave during the crisis, and we can speculate on the reasons for the enduring importance of traditional family formation patterns. Uncertainty could have led to a rush into marriage, but this fails to explain the almost universal transition to the second birth during the economic crisis. The cultural context may have played a role. Not only was economic and social insecurity alleviated by individuals' reliance on extended kinship structures, but the re-emergence of old customs and norms also filled the cultural and regulatory vacuum inherent in the fall of one of the most rigid communist regimes in the world. Cultural revival led to an emphasis on patriarchal values promoting early marriage and the traditional family. The constant level of second births, as well as the standardised marriage timing across all socio-economic groups except for high-skilled city-dwellers, is indeed suggestive of the importance of institutional influences.

However, these trends were eliminated by large-scale impoverishment during the second social upheaval in 1996–98, which exerted the clearest crisis effects on childbearing at higher parities, including on second births. Albanians also delayed the transition to marriage earlier than expected, which may indicate a weaker influence of traditional social institutions in the face of high levels of uncertainty during the civil turmoil and the Kosovo War.

Recent trends have confirmed a crucial change towards postponed family formation and the onset of the diffusion of the one-child family model. The spread of these new family behaviours throughout Albania depressed the TFR to sub-replacement levels. Marriage postponement intensified mostly among higher skilled city-dwellers, and the one-child family model remained more prevalent in cities, as was the case in other CEE countries. This helps to explain the recent fall in urban

fertility to lowest-low levels in 2006–09 (INSTAT et al., 2010). The major differentiation in reproductive patterns between urban and rural areas points to a dominant role being played by new opportunities in the labour market, which are more available in cities, rather than by ideational change.

Despite the strong Western orientation of Albanian society and major changes in lifestyles, significant signs of the second demographic transition have yet to appear. Although postponed marriage constitutes a historical transformation of the Albanian family, the event remains closely related to entry into motherhood. Family enlargement is still compressed over a relatively short age interval, and second birth remains the norm in rural areas even though it is no longer universal. Moreover, the incidence of early marriages has not declined much, especially among low-skilled city dwellers, who have also continued to have higher fertility. A large part of this population, in fact, originated from the countryside, and it has been shown elsewhere how the Albanian rural exodus is closely related to traditional models of marriage and family formation (Lerch, forthcoming). The increasing heterogeneity in family behaviour mirrors the diversity in social influences arising from the transition and modernisation of society as well as the rise in income inequality that has accompanied economic development. Traditional family formation models may remain attractive for a significant share of women because of the limited perspectives that many are offered on the labour market, and the continuing importance of patriarchal culture in Albania. Although significant progress has been achieved in socio-economic development, gender equality has only recently been given higher priority with the definition of a national gender strategy in 2008 which aims to promote women's participation in society.

Although this analysis has confirmed the transformation from an early and high fertility to restricted and delayed childbearing in post-communist Albania, two observations did not fit the bi-phasic response model. First, as in other post-communist countries which have experienced acute social upheaval, demographic responses in Albania in the 1990s indicated the importance of the social and cultural environment. Individual fertility responses to the post-socialist crisis may have been influenced not only by coping strategies at the family or community level but also by the social effects of a re-traditionalisation of society. An institutional analysis would be most appropriate to test these hypotheses. Second, behaviours that were attributed to an improvement in the socio-economic context had already appeared during the second paroxysm of the Albanian crisis. As in other further developed CEE countries, marriage postponement and the one-child family model may have been initiated in cities to cope with uncertainty and crisis, but then have been diffused during the consolidation phase through social interaction (Kohler et al., 2002), and intensified because of new economic opportunities (Sobotka, 2008).

An increased understanding of interrelations and feedback effects between successive behavioural adaptations to the post-communist transformations would provide useful information for predicting fertility in Albania, including a potential recovery. Following the adjustment of family size to crisis circumstances, the recent decline to very low levels of fertility has mainly reflected the emergence of new family behaviours initiated by a growing urban population. With ongoing urbanisation and the recent boom in higher education, one might expect the

postponement of marriage and the one-child family model to spread further in society and to hasten the onset of advanced demographic ageing.

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