

## **I. Introduction**

The combination of historical isolation and the choice to pursue radical reforms makes Albania an interesting case study in transition economics (Åslund, Boone and Johnson 1996). As in other communist countries, not only were economists faced with the daunting task to remake the economy, but they also had to simultaneously remake the economics profession. This required constructing – nearly from scratch – a working industry to produce economists for a market system. Albania’s “especially damaging” isolation (Pashko 1993, 907) made the process more challenging than in other countries. This survey takes, as a starting point, sociological studies of the economics profession in the United States and Europe (Fourcade 2009). These, as well as studies on journal publication practices (Stiglitz 2012), rankings and productivity measures (Labland and Majumdar 2012; Laband and Tollison 2003), trends in degree enrollments (Siegfried and Walstad 2014), and hiring and citation practices (Stigler, Stigler and Friedland 1995), rely on access to a variety of data, much of it institutionally produced. Unfortunately, the legacy of Albania’s political repression combined with a tumultuous transition to democracy has created serious issues for studies that rely on institutional archival documents. Because many of the documents that would typically be used are not available or are missing, we focus on indexed publications and employ bibliometric strategies to recover institutional information.

## **II. Albania in the English-Language Economics literature**

Between 1978 and 1991, Albania was mentioned only 22 times in the English-language economics literature indexed by JSTOR. Over the same period, Poland garnered 250 mentions, Yugoslavia 151, and Bulgaria 70. Nearly all references to Albania were in articles attempting statistical estimates for Balkan and Eastern European economies. The “phrase that repeatedly crops up is... ‘except Albania’” (Ramsay 1978, 190) or the “isolated and special case of Albania” (Berend 1984, 273). Pryor opined “if only someone had the courage to make similar GNP estimates of Albania, Cuba and the Asian socialist nations, we would be able to calculate the gross world product in a common set of prices” (1979, 666). Sandström and Sjöberg noted Albania’s “persistent reluctance to share existing data on aggregate macroeconomic performance with outsiders” (1991, 943). The death of Enver Hoxha in 1985 provided an opening for change. Faced with a moribund economy rife with inefficiency,

Ramiz Alia slowly embarked on a program of economic decentralization, calling on economists to play a greater role “in order to find the optimal solutions and the most rational ways of using the country’s potentials” (in Biberaj 1987, 180).

International interest, the economic reforms of neighboring countries, and internal economic pressures opened the door to foreign consideration of the Albanian economy. Albanian economists gained access to a wider variety of academic resources, including western journals and books as well as online databases and econometric and mathematical software. Less tangible, but equally important, were opportunities to attend international conferences, to study outside of Albania, and to cooperate with colleagues in other countries. The result has been a significant increase in publications related to all aspects of the Albanian economy. For example, the full-text economic database, Econlit, returns 334 references to Albania before 2008; 143 are instances where Albania is in the title of the working paper, journal article, book review, or report.<sup>1</sup> For the same period, Econlit identifies 60 academic (peer-reviewed) journal articles published with Albania in the title (Table 1). Of these, only one was published before 1990 and only three before 1994.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1. Econlit Indexed Publications on Albania\***

<b>Years</b>	<b>Total Articles</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Topics**</b>	<b>Journals**</b>
Before 1989	1	Ellman	Overview	<i>World Economy</i>
1990 – 1994	2	Åslund & Sjoberg; Pashko	Privatization; Inflation	<i>Communist Economies and Economic Transition</i>
1995 – 1999	14	Assonitis; Gjonca, Wilson & Falkingham; Goldstein; Peev; Estrin, Dimitrov & Richet; Van Rijckeghem; Karadeloglou; Mergos, Karadeloglou & Stoforos; Giuriato; Hashi & Xhillari; Haderi; Cungu &	FDI; Health; Privatization; Ownership; SOEs; Agricultural Transition; Trade Policy Reform; Inflation; Exchange Rate	<i>Russian and Eastern European Finance and Trade; Population and Development Review; Managerial and Decision Economics; Economic Systems; Economic Analysis; Business and the Environment;</i>

<sup>1</sup> The literary search engine, EconLit, was constructed under the auspices of the American Economic Association and includes peer-reviewed journal articles, working papers from most leading universities, PhD dissertations, books, collective volume articles, conference proceedings, and book reviews beginning in 1985.

<sup>2</sup> The number of journals published and indexed by Econlit grew significantly between 1978 and 2008. Many journals began publication in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Thus, it is likely that the increased number of publications that refer to Albania reflects greater publishing opportunities rather than greater interest.

		Swinnen; Mucio, Papapanagos & Sanfey; Kalra	Determination	<i>Economics of Planning; Rivista di Politica Economica; Post-Communist Economics; Economic Development and Cultural Change; Russian and Eastern European Finance and Trade</i>
2000 - 2004	22	Jarvis (2); Lawson, McGregor, & Saltmarshe; Bezemer; Hashi; Case; Papapanagos & Sanfey; Falkingham & Gjonca; Alderman; Rother; Minassian; Slaveski & Nedanovski; Hallwood; Totev; Hana; Gerxhani (2); Caselli and Thoma; Cuka; Pazienza; Mathijs & Noev; Lame & Cela	Pyramid Schemes; Consumer Economics; Financial Stability; SMEs; Income Redistribution; Emigration; Fertility; Income Transfers; Comparative Economic Environments; FDI; Labor Markets; Agricultural Sustainability; Tax Evasion	<i>IMF Staff Papers; Finance and Development; World Development; Cambridge Journal of Economics; Economic Policy in Transitional Countries; European Economic Review; Journal of Population Economics; Population Studies; Journal of Public Economics; Post-Communist Economies; Eastern European Economics; Eastern Economic Journal; Economic Studies; Financial Theory and Practice; Review of Development Economics; Mediterranean Journal of Economics, Agriculture and Environment; Management</i>
2005 - 2008	21	Bitzenis & Nito (2); Arrehag, Sjoberg & Sjoblom; Magoulios; Xheneti; Azzarri, Carletto, Davis & Zezza; Gorica & Paloka; Gallerani, Krypa, Raggi, Samoggia, & Viaggi; Carletto & Zezza (2); Alexiou & Toro; de Rapper & Sintes;	SME Financing; Remittances; Healthcare; Business Support Infrastructure; Poverty; Tourism; Rural Development; Subjective Welfare and Poverty; FDI;	<i>Global Business and Economic Review; Southeastern Europe Journal of Economics; Environment and Planning C; Eastern European Economics; Amfiteatru Economic; Rivista di Economia Agraria; Journal of Development Studies; Zagreb International</i>

		Gerxhani; Kaltani; Schroeder; Castaldo, Litchfield & Reilly (2); Memaj, Koxhaj, & Qarri; Georgiadis; Stampini, Carletto, & Davis; Cattaneo; Betti & Ballini	National Security; Tax Evasion; Trade Openness; Government Transfers; Migration; Brain Drain; Currency; Property Rights; Return Migration; Trade and Factor Markets; Human Capital and Migration; Rural Non-Farm Income; Unemployment; Education Outcomes; Educational Inequalities	<i>Review of Economics and Business; Revue d'Études Comparatives Est-Ouest; Feminist Economics; Post-Communist Economics; Public Budgeting and Finance; Journal of European Economy; Spoudai; Journal of Comparative Economics;</i>
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*\* Articles published in economics journals as identified by Econlit; to be counted, articles must include the country name in the title of the article. For space considerations, topics and journals are listed only once in the relevant cell.*

The first fifteen years of the transition were a difficult period for economists. Not only did the country have to transition to a market economy, but Albanian economists had to transition to membership in an international economics community where the primary scorecard is publications in peer-reviewed, English-language journals. From the data in Table 1, we can draw several initial conclusions about the transition of the economics profession in Albania. First, of the 17 papers published before 1999 and listed in Table 1, only 3 had an Albanian author or co-author (17.6%). Between 2000 and 2004 this did not change significantly: 13.6% of articles listed in Table 1 had an Albanian author or co-author. Similarly, the period 2005 – 2008 saw just 19.0% of articles with an Albanian author or co-author. Second, it is worth noting that fewer than 4 of the 60 articles would be considered a Tier-1 publication, with the majority being classified as Tier-3 or Tier-4 by U.S. standards (Kalaitzidakis, Mamuneas, and Stengos 2011). Providing separate confirmation of the quality issue, over the same period, JSTOR (which limits its search to 172 leading journals) returned zero economics journal articles with Albania in the title and only one by an Albanian economist. Third, the articles

are uniformly empirical. This is partly an artifact of the bibliometric search process. However, searching for papers by known Albanian authors fails to yield additional data points. The absence of any theoretical or methodological papers suggests that there may still be knowledge and/or skills gaps in the education of economists. Another explanation can be found in “the absence of market competition and lower incentive structure in European universities relative to American universities skew the productive activities of European academic economists towards more applied topics and consulting” (Laband and Majumdar 2012, 240).

While the number of published papers has long been considered a useful metric of research productivity, the field also increasingly relies on citation counts. Of the ten articles listed in Table 1 that have an Albanian author or co-author, half have received zero citations, qualifying as a “dry hole” by the standards of David Laband and Robert Tollison (2003). Comparatively, Laband and Tollison (2003) estimate 26 percent of papers generally are dry holes. However, it is important to note that Laband and Tollison survey leading journals; many of the papers listed in Table 1 were published in lower ranking journals. We should therefore expect a higher incidence of dry holes from these journals. Three of the papers listed in Table 1 are “essentially un-cited”, having between one and five citations.

### III. Curricula and dissertations in Economics

Following the political and economic collapse of 1991 and the radical transition to a market economy that followed, Albanian universities found themselves with “instructors with little or no formal training in western economics, and indeed who were trained in very different and often conflicting approaches” (Kovzik and Watts 2001, 28). They “had no choice but to go back and ‘learn economics’” (Alexeev, Gaddy and Leitzel 1992, 145). Retirements, politically motivated firings, and emigration thinned the ranks of professional economists quickly.<sup>1</sup> The number of faculty employed by FEUT shrunk by half between 1980 and 2000 recovering only in the most recent decade.<sup>2</sup> Institutional memory of the period before 1990 is essentially gone, and few artifacts have been preserved. However, while old curriculums are difficult to come by, some curricular changes can be tracked through the choice of

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<sup>1</sup> Additionally, some economists retrained to become business faculty in finance, management, and marketing.

<sup>2</sup> Data provided by the Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Economics.

textbooks.<sup>1</sup> Textbooks have long provided a source of data for economists interested in pedagogical changes and the sociology of training economists (Medema 2012; Peart and Levy 2011).

Denied the right to education in the native language under Ottoman rule, Shqip-language textbooks continue to be viewed as a political and cultural issue, their existence an important identifier of national independence. At the Faculty of Economics at the University of Tirana (FEUT), the textbooks were written by the faculty members in charge of the course, updated periodically. Textbooks from the communist period reflected the political viewpoint of Hoxha, including critiques of capitalism such as that in *Ekonomia Politike: Kapitalizmi Paramonopolist* (1973), as well as practical concerns such as *Ekonomia e Transportit* (Zisi, Roshi, and Sallabanda 1986). With the collapse of the communist system in 1991, Albanian economists had to choose between “wholesale adoption of the mainstream Western alternative” or some “third way” (Alexeev, Gadd, and Leitzel 1992, 147). Opting for the first, FEUT restructured following the model of business faculties in Western European universities. Efforts in curriculum reform were supported by partnerships with the University of Bamberg in Germany, the University of Nebraska Lincoln in the United States, the University of Modena in Italy and the University of Staffordshire in the United Kingdom; financial support was provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. State Department Training of Trainers program, the Soros Foundation, TEMPUS, and the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD).

Though relying on international editions of American textbooks such as N. Gregory Mankiw’s *Principles of Economics* for the first few years, one important feature of the international re-training programs was support for the development of native-language textbooks. Examples of books produced include *Hyrje në Ekonomi* (Hadëri, Kule, Qirici, and Mançellari 1996), the accompanying workbook (Duka, Kallushi, Gruda, and Binaj 1996), and *Makroekonomia Bazat Teorike* (Pere and Prenga 1995). *Hyrje në Ekonomi* was identical in structure and organization to most introductory survey textbooks available. However, it was ‘thin.’ The book had no index, no glossary, no color, and very few external references or real-world examples, making it cheap to print. *Makroekonomia* did provide a detailed list of references, though they were not integrated into the text and looked more like a suggested

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<sup>1</sup> Textbook data was collected from an examination of the FEUT and the National Library catalogs. Interviews with senior economists provided additional information.

readings list. Typical of many indigenously produced textbooks, *Makroekonomia* used English-language abbreviations such as CPI, GNP, AS/AD and employed the standard GDP accounting rule. English-language abbreviations were seen as less confusing, being complimentary to the shift to mathematical representation from the previous political economy approach. There was also a feeling that globally standardized terminology would speed curricular alignment and aid students seeking to study outside of Albania.

Nationalistic reasons for producing Albanian textbooks dovetailed with economic incentives, as some professors realized there was a niche for such publications and rushed to write their own versions (often poor quality and largely plagiarized). By the early 2000s, expertise, greater linguistic capabilities, and rising incomes lead to the textbooks written by Albanian economists being replaced with versions of standard international textbooks translated into Shqip. While the international editions of textbooks such as those by Mankiw or Campbell McConnell and Stanley Brue are equivalent to those used in most American and Western European universities, these books contain very little country-specific content. Kovzik and Watts (2002) lamented the lack of relevant examples in such textbooks. They also note that considering public policies, economic institutions, and relative living standards from a U.S. perspective can significantly reduce the relevancy and usefulness of these books in other countries.

Another way to consider the transition of the economics industry in Albania is through an examination of the doctoral dissertations produced. Dissertations are widely regarded as a hallmark of professional practice (Fourcade 2009; Sigfried and Stock 1999). Fourcade argues that a doctorate is “an academic credential providing evidence of specialized scholarly competence”, the “primary mechanism for certifying expertise in both scientific and practical matters” (2009, 72). The doctorate is the “critical device whereby the...academic profession would reproduce itself” (*ibid*, 76). Dissertations are also reflective of the demands of the market for economists. For example, in the United States, the shift to a three-essay dissertation format evolved to fit the hiring demands of the American academic market, by illustrating research potential and boosting early career publications (Stock and Siegfried 2013).



The National Library catalog identifies 66 dissertations in the subject of economics, completed between 1978 and 2008.<sup>1</sup> This is notably fewer than the five-per-year estimate given by senior economists at the university. An additional twenty-one dissertations were located in the FEUT Library for this time period; only half of these were also available at the National Library. Supplementary evidence also suggests a significant numbers of missing dissertation records: of the 39 supervising faculty listed for dissertations reported in Table 2, only seven have their own dissertations one file with the National Library or with FEUT. Thus, the summary of doctoral dissertations in Table 2 should be regarded as indicative but incomplete. For available dissertations, Table 2 summarizes the issuing university or institution as well as the field of study. Also recorded are notable Albanian, communist, and western references.

**Table 2. Doctoral Dissertations, 1978 – 2008**

Years	Count	University/ School	Fields	Notable Communist or Albanian References	Notable Western References
1978 - 1989	21	University of Tirana (15); Agricultural University of Tirana (5); Ministry of Minerals (1)	Political Economy (11) Agricultural Economics (5) Industrial Organization (6)	Marx, Lenin, Engles, Stalin, Hoxha	None
1990	11	University of Tirana (8), Military Academy (1), Planning Commissio n (2)	Political Economy (7) Economic Development (3) Finance (1) International Trade (1)	Marx, Lenin, Engles, Stalin, Hoxha, Alia; Government Reports	French writers Fountain and Rousseau; Raimund Dietz, “The Impact of Recent World Economic Changes on East-West Trade,” <i>WIIW Forschungsberichte</i> (June 1986).The World Economic Survey and articles from <i>Foreign Affairs</i>

<sup>1</sup> The National Library Catalog returns 156 dissertations with a subject identifier of “economics.” Eliminating dissertations completed after 2008, double entries, and dissertations supervised by the history faculty, 66 relevant dissertations remain.



					are also cited.
1991	5	University of Tirana (5)	Economic Development (3) Political Economy (1) Transition (1)	Marx; Albanian authors Ceni, Luci, Polena; Government Documents	None
1992	2	University of Tirana (2)	Political Econ/Transition (1)  Industrial Org. Theory (1)	Marx, Engles, Luci  None	None  Weiss ( <i>Rev. Economics and Statistics</i> 1972); Greer ( <i>J. of Industrial Economics</i> 1971); Strickland and Weiss ( <i>J. Political Economy</i> 1976); Philips (unidentified 1970); Bloch ( <i>Canadian J. of Economics</i> 1974); Miller ( <i>J. Industrial Economics</i> 1969)
1993	0	--	--	--	--
1994	3	University of Tirana	Transition (1) History of Public Finance (1) Finance (1)	Government documents and data	World Bank, IMF papers
1995 - 1999	17	University of Tirana	Industrial Organization (4) Agricultural Economics (2) Economic Development (2) Public Finance (2) International Trade (2) Political Economy (1) Finance (1) Health Economics (1) Money and Banking (1) Statistics (1)	Government documents; Albanian author Kristo; the Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT)	Pigou's <i>Study in Public Finance</i> (1927); Rima's <i>Development of Economic Analysis</i> (1985); Hausman's <i>The Philosophy of Economics</i>  Textbooks: Samuelson-Nordhaus's <i>Economics</i> ; Spiegel's <i>History of Economic Analysis</i> ; Mankiw's <i>Principles of Economics</i> ; Maddala's <i>Introduction of Econometrics</i> ;

					Heckman's <i>Handbook of Econometrics</i> ; Dornbush and Fisher's <i>Macroeconomics</i>
2000 - 2004	6	University of Tirana	Industrial Organization (2) Economic Development (2) International Trade (1) Political Economy (1)	Government documents; INSTAT	Textbooks: Varian's <i>Microeconomics</i> ; Gujarati's <i>Basic Econometrics</i>
2005 - 2008	10	University of Tirana	Industrial Organization (2) Economic Development (2) Agricultural Economics (3) Finance (1) Money and Banking (1) Macroeconomics (1)	IMF and World Bank Working Papers; Albanian Workings Papers (Government, Central Bank); INSTAT; OECD	Reinhart and Rogoff ( <i>Am. Econ Rev.</i> 1984); Arrow ( <i>Rev. Economics and Statistics</i> 1962)  Textbooks: Maddala; Gujarati; Greene's <i>Econometric Analysis</i> ; Wooldridge's <i>Introductory Econometrics and Cross-Section and Panel Data</i>

Governmental and university policy throughout the 1980s recommended that dissertations identify and address a specific problem in Albania. Doctoral dissertations in Albania proposed strategies to improve the efficiency of the chromium and dairy industries and considered the use of electrical power in machinery manufacture. The development of railway, road, and hydroelectric infrastructure were also popular topics. Albanians eschewed complicated theoretical mathematical models for descriptive statistics and simple forecasting. Dissertations produced in the 1980s in Albania are remarkably similar to works produced by American Institutionalists in the 1920s and 1930s (Rutherford 2011). Much like the Institutional method, Albanian dissertations relied on case studies of industries, empirical data collection, and copious tabular summaries of data. Though notably fewer in quantity, some of the dissertations produced at FEUT followed the Soviet model, applying

and interpreting Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist thought as reflected by Hoxha. These are listed as “political economy.”

In Table 2, the years surrounding Albania’s transition to a market economy are examined individually to better elucidate how economics practice responded to the collapse of the communist system. Though recognizing the nonrandom nature of our sample of dissertations, 1990 was still a remarkably prolific year for the production of economists with eleven completed dissertations. One can speculate that change seemed imminent and some students rushed completion under the old system rather than deal with uncertainty under the new. Dissertation topics reflect a mix of communist political economy (perfecting state cooperative relationships) and industrial case studies (mining, furniture production). There were several dissertations on global trends in trade that year as well. Dissertations completed in 1990 all cite at least one, and usually several, of the following authors: Marx, Lenin, Engels, Stalin, Hoxha, or Alia.

Of the five dissertations completed in 1991 (Table 2), only one cites any of the foundational works related to communist economics (Marx) and none cite Hoxha or Alia. All deal with some aspect of economic development and the transition necessary for the Albanian economy. Topics include labor productivity in industrial manufacture, agriculture in mountainous regions, implications of national debt, access to banking credit in agriculture, and theoretical and practical aspects of budget transformation for a market economy.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the data in Table 2. First, communist political economy vanished essentially overnight. By 1994, all references to communist foundational texts had disappeared. References to Hoxha ceased immediately with the fall of the communist regime in Albania in 1991. Second, the topics chosen for dissertations were representative of the concerns of a developing or transitional country. Albanian economics practice was driven by immediate economic issues and real-world problems; there was little interest in theoretical issues. Third, citation practices developed prior to 1991 have had a lingering and negative impact on economics practice. Dissertations produced throughout the 1990s and early 2000s lacked literature reviews. Citation practices evidenced poor technical style, including missing bibliographies/reference lists, missing references, poor citations within the text, and incomplete information (missing journal titles, publishers, and years). Excepting a handful of dissertations, most fail to cite foundational papers in the literature,

opting instead for working papers and a hodge-podge of easily accessible journal articles and government and organizational reports.

Fourth, that only five of the 39 dissertation advisors identified from the period of 1980 to 2010 oversaw more than one dissertation (and only three supervised more than two) reflects the instability of the FEUT faculty and contributes to the format and citation issues.

#### IV. Conclusions

It is clear that what was taught and how economics was practiced in Albania in 2008 bears little resemblance to what was taught and how economics was practiced in 1978 – the people, the institutions, and the methods have changed dramatically. The extent of change is even more extraordinary when one considers the dire financial conditions that persisted in government and in the universities throughout the 1990s and the complete economic collapse of the Albanian economy in 1997. Despite remarkable progress, in 2008, Albania was still missing some critical components of professional economics practice. A survey of publishing practices in both international and Albanian journals illustrates how the history of isolation and Hoxha-dominated political economy undermined perceptions about the usefulness and necessity of citations. Albanian economics remains disconnected from the mid-century economic theory and the critical and formative papers of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Though there is some evidence that economics practice has become increasingly separated from economic theory generally (Biddle and Hamermesh 2016), in Albania they were never associated. This has continuing implications for the quality of work that can be produced, reflecting Pashko's view that "the transition seems never ending" (in Orlowski 2001, 297).

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