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# SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF POTENTIAL MIGRANTS OF THE MOUNTAINOUS REGION OF ADJARIA

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### Abstract

Maintenance of the optimum quantity of population in mountainous regions of the world and management of migration processes are among urgent matters. The problem is so difficult that it requires a complex study and foresees regional originalities. Therefore, the main objective of the research is to study the aims and factors involving potential migrants in possible migration processes, based on the example of Georgia, in particular on the example of the mountainous region of Adjara. The research was mainly based on sociological questioning and an in-depth interview method, by which a comparison of surveys conducted in the Soviet period and in independent Georgia as well as a comparison of quantitative and qualitative properties of migration processes were performed. As a result of the research, it was concluded that main reasons causing potential migration processes in the modern period are not social, but economic and ecological factors. Besides, in different social groups, geographical originalities of trends of expected migration processes were found. Therefore, events managing the expected migration processes are set, which would bear huge importance for working out the country's migration policy and efficiently fulfilling municipal programs.

### Key words

demographics, population, migration, economy, Adjara, Georgia.

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## 1. Introduction

The collapse of the system of socialist states resulted in a whole series of systemic transformation processes (Haček, 2021; Norkus, 2012; Rose, 2009). It was no different in Georgia (Stefes, Paturyan, 2021; Jawad, 2005). Among other, these processes caused changes in the demographics of these societies.

In terms of natural movement, these changes are generally in line with the second demographic transition (SDT) (Sobotka, 2008; Wilson 2013), including both changes in fertility (e.g. Čipin et al., 2020; Šprocha, Bačík, 2021) and mortality (e.g. Billingsley, 2011; Brainerd, 2021). The situation is slightly different in the case of migrations, which are only partially compliant with the SDT, as a very large percentage

of post-communist countries, especially the poorer ones, have a negative net migration (e.g. Matviyshyn, 2021; Vakhitova, Fihel, 2020).

Major changes also take place as regards internal migrations in post-communist countries. In the socialist period, new industrial plants were often set up in backward rural areas (Hudec, Urbančíková, 2008). Foreign direct investment (FDI) appeared in these countries after opening the markets of the former socialist bloc. Contrary to investments from the previous period, these are not localized in order to level disparities between regions. Locations are chosen by companies in order to maximize profits. Therefore, they are located in regions attractive to investors: with good transport accessibility, large human resources, etc. (Kakaš, Gruber, 2016). It is no different in Georgia. This factor may worsen the economic situation of the population in peripheral regions, including mountain regions, and result in increased emigration (Karachurina, Mkrtchyan, 2019; Popijaková et al., 2018; Rosič et al., 2018).

The study of originalities of the development of social-economic and migration processes in mountain regions of Georgia (Kohler et al., 2017; Putkaradze, Putkaradze, 2019) and the world (Bachmann et al., 2019; Coleman, 2008; Gleeson et al., 2015; Gurung et al., 2012; Messerli, 2012; Zhelezov, 2011) has shown that the main reasons for migration include the difference between social-economic levels and changes in ecological conditions, although quantitative and qualitative properties bear the regional nature (Abuselidze, 2019; Benz, 2016; Nicilovic, 2011; Gretter et al., 2017; Löffler et al., 2016; Mladenov, 2011). Therefore, finding out the development tendencies of expected migration processes in a particular region will have a big importance for

perfecting a sustainable demographic and social-economic development of mountain regions.

Changes in the field of the world business structure and the accelerated development of urbanization processes had an essential impact on the population's migration processes. The mentioned regularity has involved almost all country, especially the mountainous regions, where the population intensively moves from mountains to plains, thus creating one of the urgent issues for mankind – to maintain an optimum amount of population in mountain regions. A similar problem is especially urgent in mountainous regions of Georgia, where the demographic situation constitutes a significant social and economic challenge.

The main goal of this research is to study (based on the example of the Adjarian region) the quantitative and qualitative properties of the development of migration processes based on sociological interviews held during two different periods. The second goal is to find out the prognosis of expected migration processes by analyzing factors causing a possible involvement of potential migrants in the migration process. In order to achieve these objectives, solutions to the following tasks are needed:

- comparing results of sociological interviews held in 1990 and 2019 and determining the reasons for potential migration processes during the two different systemic periods;
- breaking down the causes of potential migrants' involvement in migration processes and determining the originalities of social and economic factors of migration processes;
- analyzing the potential migrants' views in the modern period and regulating the migration processes accordingly;



Fig. 1. Keda, Shuakhevi and Khulo municipalities in the context of the administrative division of Georgia.

Source: Own study.

- finding out the social and economic mechanism to manage expected migration processes and setting ways to optimize the population's areal (territorial) movement.

The study object is the mountainous region of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara (Keda, Shuakhevi and Khulo Municipalities) (fig. 1), which are known as those with the highest population reproduction rate among the mountainous regions of Georgia and play an essential part in the country's demographic development. Therefore, the study conducted based on the example of a particular region would have the enlightening and applicable meaning as well.

## 2. Data and methods

Factors causing migration have such a complicated nature that a study of their quantitative and qualitative properties needs a complex approach. The main basis of this study was ethnographic research and a sociological interview, by means of which in-depth interviews and data modelling were conducted in a formal and informal environment (Anderson, 2003; Hammersley, Atkinson, 2019; Lu, Nepal, 2009; Berg, Lune, 2012). Based on the applied method, reasons and factors causing migration during the two different periods were found along with quantitative indicators of potential migrants. By means of extrapolation (Ribakovskiy, 1978; Bakhmutova, 1982), the development of indicators of the intensity of migration processes in the past period was analyzed. By application of the gravitation method (Oninenko, Popovkin, 1973; Zaionchkovskaya, 1988), the impact of migrants' attraction to a region in an expected migration processes was assessed. By applying historical, comparative, statistical and spatial-temporal

analysis methods, the quantitative and qualitative properties of the possible development of the expected migration processes were established.

The statistical data used in the article were collected based on the desk research method. The basic data taken for analysis come from National Statistics Office of Georgia. Besides, the results of interviews with regional public school teachers and students were used.

## 3. Results and discussion

During of recent century, the basic trend of migration processes in Georgia has been from the mountains to plains and from villages to cities, which has led to a negative impact on the demographic development of mountainous regions of Georgia, but this process has had an economic importance during the scheduled thrift conditions of the Soviet period. An analysis of originalities of the demographic development of the mountain regions during the Soviet period has shown that migration processes have mainly been caused by socio-economic factors (Jaoshvili, 1996; Meladze, 2007; Tsuladze et al., 2008). Yet in independent Georgia, this factor was accompanied by political processes and a worsened ecological condition. Therefore, the scales and trends of migration processes throughout these two different periods substantially differ. Z. Zainchikovskai (1988) consider that forecasting of migration processes should rely not only on orientation of economic regularities, but on orientation of personal values as well. Coming out of this, in order to reach the study goal, we have considered to compare and analyze materials from sociological interviews with the population conducted in two different epochs – in 1990

Tab. 1. Results of a sociological interview regarding the population of mountainous Adjara in 1990 and 2019.

№	Factors causing the migration	Amount of prioritized factors named according the range in the first, the second and the third places					
		1990 year			2019 year		
		I	II	III	I	II	III
1	Lack of land	227	125	90	126	162	188
2	Profitability	202	384	245	141	116	91
3	Change in the labor structure	58	56	59	48	42	38
4	Creation of workplaces	16	17	33	263	230	196
5	Improvement in cultural and living conditions	211	149	152	36	28	31
6	Increase in prices of agricultural production	95	133	159	93	102	108
7	Improvement in transportation conditions	47	63	128	52	48	44
8	Supply of the Internet	–	–	–	51	58	76
9	Ecological condition	–	–	–	89	108	132
Total		856	856	856	904	904	904

Source: The table has been developed based on the materials of a field study conducted in 1990 and 2019.

(Putkaradze, 1991) and in 2019 and – to draw proper conclusions (see table 1).

The presented data (table 1) clearly shows that, according to sociological interviews held in 1990, potential migrants had the following prioritized reasons for migration (among the seven factors throughout the related range): the first place – profitability, in particular – low salaries (26.5% of interviewees), the second place – improvement in cultural and living conditions (24.6% of interviewees) and the third place – the lack of land (23.6% of interviewees). 74.7% of the interviewees in that period considered that the named factors needed improvement. For that period, the increase in workplaces was insignificant among the factors causing potential migration, as it was named in the first places only by 1.8% of the respondents.

The mentioned factor actually did not influence the migration processes, as the population was practically employed. The sociological interview held in 2019 significantly differs from the one held in the previous period. In particular, 26.6% of the respondents chose the increase in the workplaces in the first place among nine factors causing migration; 15.6% of the respondents indicated low financial income in the second place, and the lack of land stands in the third place being chosen by 13.9% of the respondents. This indicates that potential migrants prioritize issues of an economic nature. Besides, worsened ecological condition has no less meaning, as 9.8% of the respondents put this problem in the first place. From analysis of the interviews with the population, it is obvious that potential migrants from the Soviet period prioritized social problems, whilst this factor in the modern period was indicated in the first place only by 4.0% of the respondents.

The worsened ecological condition in the region has no less impact on migration processes of the population of mountainous Adjara. The intensity of ecomigrants was especially outlined by the end of previous century. In particular, in 1989–1991, 19,138 persons from mountainous Adjara (i.e. 22.5% of the total population) settled in different regions of Georgia (Putkaradze, Putkaradze 2019). Recent years have obviously outlined the decreasing tendencies in the number of eco-migrants, due to environmental monitoring and implementing activities related to environmental protection – the occurrence of elemental processes was limited to its minimum. Nevertheless, according to the results of population's sociological interview held in 2019, the influence of the mentioned factor on migration processes is still high (9.5% of the interviewees put it in the first place). Thus, it resembles the situation from other regions of the former USSR, where economic

emigration prevails, but unfavorable changes in the natural environment may be the actual cause of migration, yet difficult to ascertain on a macro scale (cf. Štefančík, Seresová 2021).

Quite interesting facts were outlined as a result of the sociological interview held in 2019. Together with an increased distance from Batumi (the region's largest population center) and attitude, the influence of economic factors on migration processes are gradually increasing. For example, part of the population of the Keda municipality (nearest to Batumi and known for comparatively good environmental conditions) is employed in Batumi. On the other hand, the named municipality produces ecologically pure and quite expensive vegetables. Accordingly, a comparatively high level of employment and expensive prices of agricultural production do not constitute the main reason for migration. The influence of economic factors on migration processes are obviously outlined on the example of the Khulo Municipality, which is further from Batumi (80–90 km away) and is located 900–1600 meters above the sea level. Furthermore, income is low in the Khulo Municipality, and it is accompanied with a lack of land and a high level of unemployment.

High quantitative indicators of potential migrants' involvement in migration processes are also confirmed by the fact that 626 respondents out of 904 (69.2%) were going to move from their permanent residential place, and 278 of them (30.8%) intended to stay at their place in 2019. As an answer to the question where they were going to settle in, the vast majority (92.3%) answered that on the sea coast of Adjara, with 79.6% of them intending to settle in Batumi. 7.3% of the respondents planned to settle in Tbilisi, and the rest of them (0.4%) in other regions of our country. This specific high share of potential migrants desiring to settle in Adjara is caused by their will to live in their home region. On the other hand, some residents of Batumi and adjacent areas benefit with their grandfathers' lands situated at the areas of their origin.

In order to give a complex nature to research, opinions of students of Batumi State University whose permanent residence place is in the studied territory (the most active contingent of potential migrants) on migration was studied. In particular, only 18.0% out of 128 respondents intend to return to mountainous Adjara after graduation (see table 1). The mentioned circumstance indicates the high involvement of the most mobile social group in migration processes that should, by all means, be foreseen to ensure social balance and develop sustainable demographic processes in the regional population. The results of an interview with regional public

school teachers drastically differ. For instance, only 8 (or 10.8%) out of 74 teachers intend to change their place of permanent residence (see table 1). This results from the fact that this contingent of population is employed and, according to the law on mountainous regions, their salary rates are 35% higher comparing to an average teacher salary in Georgia.

According to quantitative and qualitative properties acquired in the study, it is possible to discuss expected opportunities of potential migrants' involvement in migration processes, but in order to determine complex cause-and-effect correlations, it is necessary to determine the development tendencies of the expected processes by a migration forecasting approach. For this purpose, it is acceptable to apply the extrapolation method of forecasting (Ribakovski 1982 and Bachmutova 1978) by means of which the intensity of the development originalities of migration processes held in the previous period will be analyzed (see table 2).

According to the presented data (see table 2), negative migration balance of the studied region in 1990–2000 was 28,501 persons, in 2001–2011 – 11,035 persons and in 2012–2019 – 1,057 persons. It is obvious that during the recent 30 years, the intensity of migration per each 1,000 person has noticeably decreased from 383 persons (1990–2000) to 19 persons (2012–2019). Therefore, we can suppose that the involvement of potential migrants in migration processes will be continue with less intensity comparing to previous periods.

It is known that the level of attractiveness to potential migrants affects the migration intensity. For this purpose, the gravitational method was applied while evaluating the migration (Onineto et al. 1973 and Zaionchkovskaya 1988). Owing to it, it was possible to find out how much impact a particular territory has on attracting migrants. According to sociological interviews, the main attraction region for potential migrants is the sea coast of Adjara (92.3% of migrants), especially the city of Batumi (79.6%).

However, it should be noted that less employment opportunities, high accommodation prices in Batumi, and lack of available land in village settlements actually forecast that the population of this region lagging behind economically would be able to make their desires come true. Thus, the direction of the studied migrations confirms the results of other studies from post-communist countries (Bulatović and Rajović 2018 and Kakaš 2017) that internal migrants mainly go to the largest city in the region.

Due to the complexity of the studied matter, it is necessary to compare the quantitative and qualitative properties of migration processes taking place in mountain regions of Georgia. As a result of the research conducted by the present authors (Putkaradze, Putkaradze, 2019; Putkaradze, Abuselidze, 2019), it was found out that in 1990–2016 the population of mountain regions of Georgia decreased by 237,939 persons (i.e. by 46.5%). The negative migration balance was observed in all mountain regions. But intensity indicators have noticeably decreased in recent years. Hence, the mentioned tendencies are also outlined in mountainous Adjara, which is restricted due to economic factors of migrants' settlement in areas of attraction.

The precision of the mentioned topic also requires analyzing demographic processes of mountain regions of the world and neighboring countries of the Caucasus. Since the 1950s, in the population of mountain regions of Eastern Europe decreasing tendencies of migration processes have been observed (Löffler et al., 2016; Mladenov, 2016; Nicilovic, 2016; Gretter, 2017). In neighboring countries of the Caucasus, in particular, the demographic development of Armenia almost coincides with originalities of migration processes of mountain regions of Georgia (Yeganyan, 2010). The population of mountain region of Azerbaijan is characterized with much less intensity of a decrease in numbers (Avdeev, 2015), although the mountain region of the Caucasus on the Russian Federation's side is known for far better

Tab. 2. Intensity of migration processes of the population of mountainous Adjara in 1990 and 2019.

Years	Population quantity (persons)	Absolute value of natural increase (persons)	Population quantity at the end of the given period together with natural increase (persons)	Negative migration balance	Migration intensity per 1,000 persons
1990	84700	8101	92801	28501	383
2000	64300				
2001	63300	4435	67735	11035	184
2011	56700				
2012	56200	2357	58857	1057	19
2019	57800				

Source: the table has been developed based on the National Statistics Office of Georgia.



demographic properties, which is related to local ethnic people's traditions and religious factors (Za-girova, 2016).

#### 4. Conclusions

The analysis of demographic processes of mountain regions of the world and Georgia clearly shows that tendencies in population decrease are observed everywhere because of migration processes. Therefore, migration processes in mountainous Adjara will continue, but with the methodological approach to forecasting the migration processes, its intensity will presumably be lower comparing to the previous period.

The study makes it clear that reasons causing the potential migration of the population of mountainous Adjara during of the two different periods significantly changed in line with socio-economic and ecological factors. Besides, decreasing tendencies are observed as regards the indicators of potential migrants' involvement in migration processes, which is caused by restricted economic possibilities of migrants' settlement in attractive regions (migration intensity coefficient per 1,000 population in 1990–2000 was 383 and in 2012–2019 – 19). According to the results of a sociological interview, the majority of potential migrants intend to settle on the coast of Adjara, but a lack of the land in the region and high prices in city settlements prevent them from realizing their desires. Therefore, in the nearest future, decreased migration flows are expected in mountainous Adjara.

By foreseeing the factors of possible involvement of potential migrants from mountainous Adjara in migration processes, it has been determined that their quantitative indicators will develop with decreasing tendencies. In order to regulate the existed issue, it is necessary to start effective municipal programs, thus limiting the migration flows to their minimum, and state projects should be deployed regarding of region's demographic and economic development.

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