Regional aspects of migration and urbanization in the USSR/Russia in the 20th–21st centuries (using the example of the Penza region)

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Abstract. Based on the analysis of statistical data and office documentation, the processes of mechanical movement of the population of the Penza region in the 1930s-2020s are studied. The subject of the study is to determine the factors, regional specifics and the results of migration activity. The methodological basis of the study is the theory of cyclicity of demographic processes. General scientific methods, methods of descriptive statistics and statistical inference are used. The incentives for migration movement have been identified, among which the key ones are reforms of administrative-territorial division; implementation of programs for mobilization and redistribution of labor resources; coercion as a way to counteract labor absenteeism; processes of urbanization, industrialization, “rejuvenation” of the population (in the context of the agricultural and demographic transitions); evolution of living standards. The regional feature lies in the agrarian nature of the region’s economy and, as a result, in the strengthening of the values of traditional society, which explains the shift in the amplitude of fluctuations and the scale, as well as the change in the directions migration. The chronological and structural limits of interregional and external migration are determined.

1 Introduction

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Penza province was an region of agricultural specialization, for a long time having developed as a sociocultural enclave on the periphery of the Russian Empire. The remoteness from traditional routes of communication, the availability of resources for the reproduction of the traditional economic model, and the low level of industrial development contributed to the formation of this territory as one of the centers of the “community revolution” in Russia. The development of railroads and increased seasonal migration in the 1890s did not stop the growing crisis. New adaptation frames have not had time to form. Under those conditions, accelerated industrialization became a cultural shock, a tectonic break in the usual patterns of consciousness and behavior. One of the aspects of adaptation/resistance of traditional society was the organized and spontaneous migration movement in the 1930s-1950s. The end of the

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agrarian and demographic transitions added labor shortages to internal migration and overurbanization.

New challenges determine the social demand for studying the mechanisms and resources of society’s adaptation to the pace and intensity of mechanical movement of the population, integration of cultural experience, overcoming of cultural fragmentation and loss of value guidelines. Thus, the relevance of the analysis of regional migration and urbanization in the 20\textsuperscript{th}-21st centuries is determined by the necessary introduction of effective mechanisms for solving problems in managing migration processes. This study aims to study migration and urbanization as factors transforming regional identity and forming integrative ties (using the example of a specific Russian region – the Penza region).

2 Literature review

Soviet “historical urbanism” assessed industrialization and technical re-equipment of agriculture in the USSR as the main factors of leading trend in social dynamics – the movement of the rural population to cities [1]. In the early 1970s, A.G. Vishnevsky developed the concept of demographic transition, emphasizing the revolutionary nature of the changes that took place [2]. Speaking about the results of these processes, the author the increased in controllability and stability of the demographic processes. The conclusion of A.G. Vishnevsky about sustainable changes in demographic behavior of the population of the USSR/Russia that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century is of fundamental importance. The Soviet Union became one of the first countries (being a significant part of the so-called “Northern Ring”), where the fertility and mortality ratio made simple reproduction of the population impossible (since 1964). Since 1992, natural growth has given way to population decline [3].

Modern urban studies expand the subject field, complementing the demographic and ekistic (settlement) aspects with an analysis of the systemic restructuring of the social structure and way of life, as well as the formation of a new socio-cultural environment [4].

Of particular importance is the study of intensity and cyclicality of population migration in the USSR. So, G.E. Kornilov taking an example drawn based on materials from the Urals identifies three waves of demographic decline of the countryside: the late 1950s–1960s, the 1970s and 1980s. The author names a decrease in the amplitude of fluctuations as a characteristic trend. Each subsequent wave of migration, as well as the rollback (in the mid-1960s, late 1970s and early 1990s) was inferior in magnitude to the previous one. Among the main factors for the growth or decline of migration flows, the researcher identifies demographic (rejuvenation of the population), socio-political (ease of passport-restriction programs, resettlement programs for “unpromising villages”, etc.) and economic ones [5].

State policy in managing demographic processes and migration movements of the population was studied in depth by L.N. Mazur. Changes in the doctrine of population settlement in the USSR concerned issues of ongoing industrialization and strengthening of social and cultural stability. In this regard, the author identifies two stages of transformation of the settlement network in the USSR: the 1930s-early 1950s, and the late 1950s-1970s. The development of the new doctrine was significantly affected by mass housing construction and construction of cultural facilities in the late 1950s-early 1960s. According to the author, political activity in the field of resettlement processes did not resolve the existing contradictions, on the contrary, it provoked a new wave of migration to cities, thereby undermining the social and moral foundations of the rural way of life [6].

The regional aspects of the problem have not been sufficiently studied, except the topical issue of external migration as a factor in replenishing labor resources in the Penza region [7, 8, 9].
3 Materials and Methods

The Source Corpus is formed by materials collected at the State archive of the Penza region and the Russian state archive of economics, as well as published regional statistics that reveal various urbanization features and migration activity in the region. Data on the number and places of movement of the population of the Penza province are presented in the collection of statistical information for 1920–1926 as well as in the official data of the Territorial Body of state statistics for the Penza region for the 1990s–2020s.

The theory of cyclicity of demographic processes and population is the methodological basis of the study. The authors use relevant statistical tools, such as descriptive statistics, interference methods and multivariate analysis. When analyzing factors of population migration, methods of formal analysis of statistical data and modeling of migration flows are used.

4 Results

The mobilization economic policy and the implementation of Stalin’s superprogram for accelerated industrial development outlined the general direction of migration activity of the population in the USSR. Under those conditions, the fate of agricultural regions was predetermined. The administrative-territorial division reforms of 1928 eliminated the Penza province as an independent entity, and its territory became part of the Middle Volga region. A year later, in the course of total collectivization, the state tested new labor management practices, eliminating kulak farms in areas totally covered by collectivization. The first cases of forced displacement of kulak families were recorded in 1929, the peak of evictions occurred in 1931, however, evictions still continued in 1932 (including repeated ones – of peasants who fled to large cities, primarily to Penza). Similar sad events also happened in 1933, and in 1937–1938.[10] The “kulak exiles” for Middle Volga peasants mainly included the Northern Territory and Kazakhstan, and, to a lesser extent, the Far Eastern Territory, the Urals and Eastern Siberia. According to documented data, the total number of dispossessed and evicted peasants from the regions of the Penza sector (which later became part of the Penza region) in 1929–1934 amounted to 39,809 people. Taking into account cases of spontaneous migration and continued evictions (despite Stalin’s neo-NEP policy), this figure can be significantly increased [10]. According to data as of July 1, 1934, the rural population in 16 districts of the right bank of the Middle Volga region was 1,296,500 people. Thus, during this period, 3% of rural residents of the Penza region were forcibly moved to other places [11].

The migration activity of the population in the next decades made it obvious that agricultural policy would be the determining factor in population migration. During the Great Patriotic war, migratory movements from the Soviet countryside happened due to regular mobilizations into the Red Army, work in industry, and studies in factory training and trade schools. A separate direction of population migration was evacuation from dangerous areas at the beginning of the war. Thus, by the end of 1941, 124 thousand evacuees arrived in the Penza region, including 54 thousand children [State Archive of the Penza region (GAPO), fond p-148, series 1, file 531, p. 42; f. r-2038, s. 1, f. 496, p. 67].

In 1926–1938, the natural increase in the rural population in the USSR amounted to 34.1 million people, while due to the transformation of rural settlements into cities and the migration of rural residents to cities, the rural population was reduced by 24.5 million people [12].

The post-war period witnessed the course of agrarian policy was aimed at implementing of mobilization programs of greater or less intensity (enlargement of collective farms in the 1950s-early 1960s; the fight against violations of the Charter of the agricultural artel;
implementation of the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of June 2, 1948 “On the eviction of persons who maliciously evade work in agriculture and lead an antisocial parasitic lifestyle” to remote areas, etc.).

It should be noted that the level of labor absenteeism in Penza villages was one of the highest in the country. Thus, in 1946, 43.6% of collective farmers did not fulfill the minimum required workdays, in 1947 the figure was 32.2%. Administrative measures did not promote any changes. In 1948, this figure dropped to 31%, but more than 2% of able-bodied collective farmers did not work at all [Russian State Archive of Economics (RGAE), f. 9476, s. 2, f. 18, p. 9; s. 1, f. 1667, p. 142, 143; f. 7486, s. 7, f. 722, p. 14]. In 1949, the average number of workdays for female collective farmers did not exceed 149 workdays, while the national average was 197 workdays [RGAE, f. 9476, s. 1, f. 1709, p. 76]. In 1952, the Campaign on strengthening labor discipline on collective farms ended with the eviction of 585 people from the Penza region. Members of their families voluntarily left their homes and accompanied those evicted [RGAE, f. 9476, s. 2, f. 18, p. 63].

In 1950, the enlargement and centralization of collective farms, as well as the transformation of collective farms into state farms, became the new directions of the agrarian policy. As a result, the number of collective farms in the USSR decreased by 52.4% [13]. The largest mergers and takeovers occurred at the turn of the 1950s-1960s from 69.1 in 1958 to 36.9 thousand in 1965. In general, for the period 1958–1976 the number of agricultural artels decreased by 60%, and collective farmers by 40% [14].

In the Penza region, the number of collective farms decreased from 1,904 in 1940 to 1,074 in 1950, and was 847 in 1953. The most intensive enlargement of collective farms occurred in the 1950s (by 1960 the number of collective farms in the region was 161). [15]. In 1978, there were 169 collective farms and 256 state farms, including experimental farms [GAPO, f. r-2038, s. 1, f. 6988, p. 1, 10]. Similar significant changes occurred in employment. In 1939, the collective farm peasantry made up 53.4% of the total population of the region, in 1959 – 35.1%, and in 1967 – 17.6% [15]. At the same time the region lagged significantly behind its closest neighbors in terms of urbanization. Thus, in 1939 the share of city residents was 17.3%, in 1959 – 33.1%, and only by the 1970s this figure exceeded 50% [16].

The consolidation of collective farms was objectively influenced by a change in life strategies in favor of moving to settlements with developed industrial production and better working conditions. In this case, the low index of urbanization and industrial development of the Penza region in the first post-war decade contributed to the predominance of interregional migration. At the same time, there was a significant increase in migration activity within the region. So, in 1950 the mechanical increase in the urban population of region was 5,120 people, in 1951 – 7,451 people [GAPO, f. r-921, s. 7, f. 9, p. 3] This happened due to student enrollment in higher education institutions and vocational schools, as well as employment in industrial enterprises and construction. The outflow of population was caused by the departure of students who graduated from educational institutions and “recruitment” employment programs created for the Moscow, Kuibyshev, Sverdlovsk regions and Khabarovsk Territory [GAPO, f. r-921. s. 7. f. 9. p. 4]. The mechanical increase in the urban population in 1952 amounted to 7993 people and occurred mainly due to the rural population, of which 76.1–80% were the population of the region; in 1953 – 14726 people, in 1954 – 8925, in 1970 – 9135 people, in 1976 – 5694 [GAPO, f. r-921, s. 7, f. 9, p. 33; f. 21, p. 2; f. 100, p. 1; f. 134, p. 1].

The gradual development of industry in Penza and the implementation of housing programs reduced the outflow of population outside the region. Thus, during the period from 1960 to 1969, the migration loss of population (from rural areas) decreased from 3,000 to 1,500 people. At the same time, the mechanical growth of urban population
indicated positive dynamics (within 10-11 thousand people annually) [GAPO. f. r-921, s. 7, f. 921 b. p. 26]. In most cases, the population of working age migrated. The migration of rural population to cities resulted in a reduction in its number from 550 thousand (51.6%) in 1950 to 397.7 (46.8%) in 1969 [GAPO. f. r-921, s. 7, f. 921 b. p. 26]. Intensive population growth was recorded in the regional center. So, if in 1939, (it was the time of the formation of the region), the population of Penza was 159.8 thousand people, then in 1959 it was 255.500, and in 1967 the figure was 333.4 thousand people [15].

By the end of the 1960s, the shortage of labor resources in rural areas became a matter of particular concern for the Soviet authorities. Thus, in June 1969, a checking the effectiveness of measures to reduce migration flows was carried out in the Serдобsky and Bekovsky districts of the Penza region. In particular, it was found that 2,119 people left the Serдобsky district in 1967, and 2,610 people in 1968 [GAPO, f. r-2038, s. 1, f. 5130, p. 84–85].

On the other hand, due to natural population growth, the increase in small and medium-sized towns required policy adjustments regarding the location of manufacturing enterprises. Thus, in July 1968, Penza Regional Executive Committee addressed the Council of Ministers of the Russian Federation with a request to include the issue of locating new industrial enterprises in towns and settlements of the Penza region in the 1971–1975 draft plan for the development of the national economy. The authorities counted on an increase in population by 50–52 thousand people [GAPO, f. r-2038, s. 1, f. 5124, p. 4]. The given situation reflected the social consequences of over-urbanization, which included the aggravation of production, housing, and food problems in the towns of the region.

At the same time, there was slow progress in urban population growth compared to the neighboring regions. Thus, in 1979, an average of 68% of the population lived in cities of the Volga region, while in Penza this figure was only 55% (a lower figure was recorded only in the Kalmyk republic – 41%), while in the neighboring Saratov region, the figure was 71%. The highest level of urbanization was recorded in the Kuibyshev region (78%). By 1989, the share of urban population in the Volga region reached 73% (in the Penza and Kuibyshev regions – 62 and 81%, respectively) [17].

Attention should also be paid to the dynamics of such a specific form of seasonal migration in the USSR as attracting employees of urban enterprises and organizations to provide “patronage assistance” to rural workers during the harvest period. The number of such temporary workers increased steadily since the 1950s. Thus, in 1950, about 200,000 city residents or 0.7% of the number of rural workers were employed in the country’s collective and state farms for the summer; in 1971 there were 700,000 or 2.6%, respectively [18]. According to the decision of the regional executive committee of July 29, 1959, the Penza and Kuznetsk city executive committees, as well as the Mokshansky, Nikolо-Pestrovosky, Pachelma and Nizhnelomovsky district executive committees were obliged to send 4,925 employees of state enterprises to the countryside for harvesting for a period of one month [GAPO, f. r -1913, s. 1, f. 3907, p. 83].

In the mid-1980s, Penza enterprises lost up to 8% of their working time on work not related to their professional duties, mainly helping rural workers in the fields. Thus, in 1985, employees of “Electromechanics” spent 99,874 man-days harvesting grain crops, sugar beets, onions, cabbage, potatoes, apples, etc. [GAPO, f. p-148, s. 1, f. 7003, p. 33, 35–36].

A significant direction of agricultural policy in the 1950s-1980s was rural urbanization, which since 1960 had been focused mainly on the optimization (reduction) of rural settlements. The perspective to completely remove the boundaries between the socio-cultural environment of the city and the countryside and optimize the types of settlements
according to production principles (agricultural, agro-industrial and non-agricultural) was to be completed before 2000 [6].

A new strategy for territorial organization of rural areas was presented at the scientific and technical meeting “Prospects for the development of Soviet urban planning” in 1970 [RGAE, f. 5, s. 1, f. 1109, p. 161–162, 164.]. The calculations were based on data concerning rapid and destructive (in the context of the reproduction of rural identity) dynamics that engulfed rural settlement. In 1970, the structure of rural areas included district and inter-farm centers, central farm estates, collective farms and state farms, field camps, “ordinary” and peripheral settlements of farms, specialized (apiaries, nurseries, fish farms, pastures) and various non-agricultural settlements. Moreover, the destruction of the “old, historically established settlement system” was designated as a practical task for the coming decades [RGAE, f. 5, s. 1, f. 1109, p. 165].

According to calculations made in July 1968, grouping settlements in the Penza region and dividing them into promising and unpromising should have led to the resettlement of 228 villages by 1980. 281 unpromising villages were to be resettled in the subsequent period. 785 settlements were classified as promising [GAPO, f. r-2038, s. 1, f. 5130, p. 2–3]. At the same time, the total number of rural settlements was 2,332 (data for 1970), of which 494 had a population of over 500 people. By 1989, the settlement network had been reduced to 1,546 settlements, including those with a population of over 500 people up to 343 [19].

The expected result of the adopted resettlement strategy was a rapid and faster (compared to the city) decline in natural growth of the rural population. For the Penza region, the milestone date in this regard was 1975 (the natural increase was only 0.5 people per 1000 people), while for urban areas the natural decline began to be recorded in 1992 [19].

The migration processes of the next decade were influenced by new factors, among which the collapse of the USSR and the growth of interethnic tension played a decisive role. In 1991, due to international migration, 7,260 people arrived in the Penza region. In 1992, this figure was 12,462. The peak of migration activity occurred in 1994 (12,858 people). At the same time, the number of refugees and internally displaced persons increased until 1998. The maximum figure (17,352 people) was recorded in 1997 [19].

When developing issues of migration movement, it is of key importance to consider factors responsible for stimulating migration activity, as well as the direction of population movement flows. Apart from the state settlement policy, programs for mobilization and redistribution of labor resources as well as the scale and intensity of migration activity would determine the level of wages and employment opportunities. So, A.V. Kruglova convincingly shows a general trend towards an increase in the correlation coefficient between the size of an average wage and the migration balance given an increase in population incomes. Using materials taken from statistics of the Penza region, she states a significant decrease in the correlation coefficient in 1992 and 1998, which emphasizes the identified dependence. The author explains the given situation by the emergence of atypical (extreme) incentives for migration activity (forced relocations due to growing interethnic tensions in neighboring countries in the first case and an acute economic crisis in the second) [20].

It is also necessary to point out the cyclical nature of the mechanical movement of the population. Let us consider this issue using the example of external (outregional) migration. Thus, in 1990, the migration increases in urban settlements of the Penza region amounted to 8,390, including 3,604 due to intraregional migration and 2,901 to inter-republican migration; in rural areas, migration increase due to those arriving from neighboring republics amounted to 3,568 people [GAPO, f. r-921, s. 7, f. 783, p. 2, 218–219].
Migration growth was recorded in the region throughout the 1990s (in 1992 it was over 10 thousand people) and the 2000s. (2000, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009 and in 2014) [7, 19, 21]. The next decade showed a steady trend towards migration decline in the region's population. The maximum value of this indicator was 5,818 people in 2018, then due to the pandemic there was a decrease to 634 people in 2021. The migration loss in 2022 amounted to 3,320 people, including 3,101 people in Penza [Migration, https://58.rosstat.gov.ru/demography].

An online survey conducted in the Penza region in 2022 showed that when choosing answers to the question about the conditions for increasing the attractiveness of the region, the most frequently cited were developed social infrastructure, employment opportunities, safety, high wages, comfortable and affordable housing [report on research work under the Russian Science Foundation grant No. 22-18-20015]. These positions will determine the incentives for external and internal migration, and in the context of a reduction in natural population growth, they will form the corresponding social and political discourse.

5 Conclusion

Thus, the mechanical movement of the population of the Penza region in the second half of the twentieth century is characterized, first of all, by an increase in migration activity of urban population, especially in the early 1950s, early 1960s and late 1960s. The core component is the mechanical movement of working population from villages to cities, mainly due to intraregional migration. Maximum peaks of migration growth occurred in 1953, 1960 and 1968. Subsequently, a steady trend towards a decrease in the rate of urbanization is recorded. The main incentives for migration activity are programs for mobilization and redistribution of labor resources; coercion as a way to combat labor absenteeism; industrialization processes and the evolution of living standards. The share of city residents in the population structure in the 2010s-early 2020s stabilized within 33–32%, which reflects the specifics of the historical development of the region.

The direction of migration flows changed in the 1990s, when the population of the region increased as a result of external (inter-republican, and after the collapse of the USSR, international migration). The migration growth of the population, who were forced to leave their places of previous residence, was especially noticeable in the first half of the 1990s. The positive balance of external migration partially persists in the next decade. After 2014, a steady trend towards a migration decline in the region’s population has been developing, which poses a serious threat to the replenishment of labor resources. The solution to the problem lies in the development of state social programs of the future that meet the requirements of living standards.

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