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ASSESSMENT OF TERRITORIAL MOBILITY AND MIGRATION OF THE POPULATION IN THE FAR EAST (THE CASE OF THE AMUR REGION)

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Abstract. *The study aims to assess the status of migration processes in the Far East in the context of modern territorial mobility and transformations in the labor market. The need for such research is justified by a significant reduction in the population of the region in recent decades caused by migration. Based on official statistics, the analysis of territorial mobility and external labor migration in the Amur region was carried out. The authors studied characteristics of migration flows, outflow and redistribution of the population within the Far East area. It was demonstrated how the long-term shift method and pendulum migration helped expand employment outside the places of residence.*

Keywords*: migration; population; territorial mobility; labor mobility; Far East; Amur region.*

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Introduction

Overcoming the population outflow and improving the demographic situation are among the most important elements of state policy for the development of the Far East.

For example, in the Amur Region, 23 federal target programs and 13 state programs are currently being implemented within the framework of project management. Large investment projects significantly increased the need for labor resources and stimulated the growth of external migration. The construction of the Bureyskaya and Nizhnebureyskaya hydroelectric power plants, the Amur highway, a giant gas processing complex, railway and pipeline transport infrastructure, and the development of the Vostochny cosmodrome (launch center) require that additional tens of thousands of people are attracted to the region. The implementation of national projects (such as "Demography", "Healthcare", "Education", "Housing and Urban Environment", "Safe and High-Quality Roads") plays a significant role in improving the standard of living and making the region attractive as a place of permanent residence and employment [Dyachenko, Lazareva, 2022a].

However, large-scale economic projects and increased investment in the modernization of social infrastructure do not help in reversing negative trends in the region and its individual districts [Razvitie ekonomiki Dal'nego ..., 2021].

It can be stated that the ongoing transformations contributed to the formation of positive trends, but could not achieve any significant changes in the demographic dynamics and ensure population growth in the Far East. The migration outflow from the region continues to be combined with low reproduction and natural population loss, defined as death rate exceeding birth rate [Dyachenko, Lazareva, 2022c; Dyachenko, Lazareva, 2022d].

In this regard, it should be emphasized that large-scale economic projects must be combined with the improved regulation of the labor market and the use of foreign labor, with better living conditions for the local population.

Methodological principles and objectives of the study

Assessing the emerging trends of the Russian reality, experts name spatial transformations and the medium-term compression of the developed space among the key trends. It is manifested in the reduction of the labor potential of small towns and rural periphery, the polarization of space coupled with the growth of agglomerations and the deformation of the supporting structure of settlement [Nefedova, Glezer, 2020, p. 214]. In turn, one of the most significant trends for the development of the Far Eastern

region is the growth of social and labor mobility. The latter is expressed in the spread of shift work and pendulum migration, the expanded use by the population of the regional periphery and the capabilities of regional and district centers for self-sufficient supply with goods and services. As a result, the importance of "irrevocable" migration as a means of improving people's living conditions is decreasing.

At the same time, temporary migration for a long period of time with subsequent return is becoming intensive. This primarily concerns educational migration. As a result, a significant proportion of those arriving in the region are people returning to their permanent place of residence after a temporary stay in another territory (Russia or abroad) [Dyachenko, Burlaev, 2017b]. At the same time, large-scale external (including international) migration remains, ensuring the migration-related growth of the population in the Far East.

Taking into account the above, the authors set the goal of assessing how the migration processes develop in the Far Eastern region in the context of modern territorial mobility of the population and transformations in the labor market.

The Amur Region was chosen as the object of the study because the differentiation of natural and climatic conditions in the region largely corresponds to the existing differences in the Far East as a whole. Conditions in some territories are equivalent to the conditions of the Far North, the southern regions are more favorable and allow for the successful development of agriculture. The settlement system includes both sparsely populated areas and areas with a high population density. In some municipalities (ME municipal entity) of the region, active investment activity is underway, which is associated with the implementation of large projects that create the basis of the Advanced development territory in Russian Federation (TASED), while other MEs are in deep depression.

The conducted study of migration processes is based on the materials of constantly updated databases created in the territorial body of the Federal State Statistics Service for the Amur Region (Amurstat); one database includes a wide range of socio-economic indicators for the MEs in the Amur Region, the second – "Priamurye Settlements" (NP Amur), as well as on the previous works of the authors [Dyachenko, 2016; Lazareva, Dyachenko, Vlasova, 2022; Dyachenko, Lazareva, 2022b] and others.

Methodologically, this study is based on the scientific research of domestic specialists such as the works by L.S. Bljahman (Л.С. Бляхман), A.G. Zdravomyslov (А.Г. Здравомыслов) and O.I. Shkaratan (О.И. Шкаратан) [Bljahman, Zdravomyslov, Shkaratan, 1965], T.I. Zaslavskaya (Т.И. Заславская) and E.E. Gorjachenko (Е.Е. Горяченко) [Zaslavskaja, Gorjachenko, 1986], devoted to the territorial mobility of the population, changes in the distribution of the population across the territory and the impact of these processes on social and economic development. The issues of spatial heterogeneity and transformations in administrative-territorial entities of different levels were raised by N.V. Zubarevich (Н.В. Зубаревич) [Zubarevich, 2010] and P.A. Minakir (П.А. Минакир) [Minakir, 2011]. Much attention is paid to the development of migration processes in the works by A.I. Trejvish (А.И. Трейвиш) [Trejvish, 2016],

N.V. Mkrtchjan (Н.В. Мкртчян) and L.B. Karachurina (Л.Б. Карачурина) [Karachurina, Mkrtchjan, 2021]. Negative trends in the development of demographic processes in the Far East and the decline in population as a result of the outflow of residents from the region were the subject of research by K.V. Shvorina (К.В. Шворина) and L.M. Falejchik (Л.М. Фалейчик) [Shvorina, Falejchik, 2018], etc. However, despite the numerous scientific studies on migration issues, the variability and dynamism of migration processes requires constant monitoring and subsequent analysis with the identification of new trends and problems.

Population mobility across regions

The modern practice for an increasing number of people includes travel outside their places of permanent residence and movements, most often for a short period of time with subsequent return from places of temporary residence.

Once the restrictions on goods and services were lifted, the territorial mobility within the existing settlement system has increased. In the 2000s, the service sector in Russia grew[1], and opportunities for providing goods and services to consumers expanded. Accordingly, the number of people employed in this sector increased and its share in the created gross product grew. The experts observed that the sectoral structure of the economy, even in the regions, is becoming increasingly tertiary [Dyachenko, Lazareva, 2021]. This process was developed to the greatest extent in large settlements, which was facilitated by the hierarchical structure of the public service system (determined by the frequency of visits to service and public outlets).

In the Amur Region (as in other regions of the country), the hierarchy of public service centers includes settlements that are centers of administrative entities, i.e. in which the following institutions are located: a) rural administrations (village councils); b) district councils; c) regional authorities and management. In conditions of the Far East, a significant part of district centers, due to their small size, are significantly limited in their ability to act as service centers for adjacent rural settlements. This applies not only to rural district centers, but also to most of the cities in the region. And the most important feature of the existing settlement system – small population – hinders the development of the service sector directly in peripheral settlements. Therefore, in many settlements of the region, service institutions, even those catering to everyday demand, are absent. Thus, most episodic and periodic services to rural residents can only be provided outside their places of residence, in regional public service centers, which at the local level are district centers.

The stepwise nature of social infrastructure determines the leading role of district centers, acting as pan-regional service centers. District centers concentrate pan-regional elements of social infrastructure

[1] The so-called "third" sphere; extractive industries are classified as the "first" and manufacturing industries as the "second" sphere of human activity. – *Edit.*

and present the widest range of structures providing services to the population, forming the maximum level of living comfort in the region's settlement system [Dyachenko, 2016]. The development of these processes, on the one hand, stimulates the territorial mobility of people within the regional periphery, on the other hand, it contributes to the growth of the migration capacity of large settlement centers and their population [Lazareva, Vlasova, Dyachenko, 2019].

In addition, visa-free tourism with China has turned into a powerful channel of "people's trade" (in Chinese terminology), in which thousands, if not tens of thousands of people have joined with greater or lesser activity, and has ensured success of a social infrastructure complex in Blagoveshchensk, a large regional center of the Far East [Dyachenko, 2015]. The fast-growing trade and other infrastructure sectors made Blagoveshchensk an important center for servicing the population of the region. As a result, the city's population grew by 105,4% in the period 2010–2020 [Amurskij statisticheskij ezhegodnik, 2021].

Improved transport infrastructure provides residents of the regional periphery with better access to goods and services in large settlements that serve as public service centers.

The availability of goods and services provided in regional centers is an important factor that characterizes the attractiveness of settlements located at a considerable distance and those located in close proximity to such service centers. It is important to emphasize that territorial proximity is important both in relation to local centers, which are district centers and cities of the region, and in relation to the regional center. In the latter case, the role of proximity (the "neighborhood effect") is manifested by the migration influx in the areas directly adjacent to the center of the region. In the period 2010–2020, the largest population growth in the Amur Region was noted in the Blagoveshchensk District and amounted to 145,6%. The determining factor in this case was the increase in the number of residents in settlements directly adjacent to the city.

On the contrary, large distance from service centers and corresponding low availability of goods and services negatively affect the population dynamics. Thus, in 2010–2020, the most intensive outflow of population was recorded on the periphery of the Amur Region, leading to a decrease in the share of such municipalities and increasing the level of population concentration in the Region (Table 1).

Table 1

Grouping of Amur region municipalities by population dynamics for the period 2010–2020*

Groups of municipalities (ME)	Number of ME	Share in the region's population, %		
		2010	2015	2020
With growth in population	3	29,6	32,0	33,8
With population decreasing within 5%	2	10,0	10,2	10,1
With population decreasing from 5% to 10%	8	26,6	25,9	25,8
With population decreasing from 10% to 16%	10	23,0	21,9	21,1
With population decreasing from 17% and more	6	10,8	10,1	9,2

* Calculated by the authors based on [Amurskij statisticheskij ezhegodnik, 2021].

In particular, clear signs of depression were demonstrated by a group of six municipalities in the Amur Region, where population decline varied from 17,4% in the Shimanovsky District, 18,0 in the Romnensky District, 18,7 in the Arkharinsky District, 18,8 in the Zeisky District, 19,0 in the Tyndinsky District, and up to 19,3% in the Bureisky District (Table 1).

The distance from the largest and most developed settlements that serve as local service centers for the population largely determines the attractiveness of living in rural settlements (RS) located at different distances from district and regional centers. Despite the limited capacity of district centers to provide access to goods and services, their remoteness has a negative impact on RS, pushing the most distant of them to demographic degradation. Thus, the calculations show that RS located up to 10 km from the district center retained 82,3% of their original population over the period from 1989 to 2019; from 10 to 15 km – 72,0; from 30 to 50 km – 62,2; from 50 to 70 km – already 44,5, and more distant ones – only 34,1% of their population.

An important factor of migration mobility in regions, currently unaccounted by statistics, is migration related to employment outside the places of residence. It not only provides the economy of regional centers with labor, but also limits the outflow of the rural population from the regional periphery. Pendulum migration and shift work allow solving employment problems without changing the place of residence.

The employment statistics at enterprises and organizations in the region's municipalities shows that while the number of employees is decreasing in the region as a whole, different trends, often of an opposite nature, can be observed at the municipal level. With a general decrease in the number of employees in the Amur Region, which amounted to 96,4% for the period 2014–2019, the number of employees increased in nine districts (while the population increased in only one municipal district). In two municipal districts, the number of employees increased more than 2-fold (Svobodny town – 240,3% and Svobodnensky District – 238,3%) [Amurskij statisticheskij ezhegodnik, 2021]. The combination of a decrease in the population and an increase in the number of employees became possible due to the external influx of workers attracted to the region on a rotational basis with a stay of less than 90 days.

It should be noted that in 15 municipalities of the region, the reduction in the number of workers was significantly greater than the number of residents, generating unemployment reaching significant levels. Thus, in the city of Raychikhinsk, which lost 3% of population from 2014 to 2019, the number of the employed over the same period decreased to 84%.

At the same time, a comparison of data from the All-Russian Population Census (ARPC) of 2010 and 2020 shows that the distribution of employment within the places of residence among rural residents of the Amur Region is quite stable. If in 2010 the share of rural residents employed in the territory of the settlement where they lived was 74,7%, then according to the ARPC of 2020 it even increased slightly – to 75,8%.

Dynamics of migration processes

For the Far East, migration was extremely importance throughout the period of its development, being a source of population growth and labor force. Therefore, studying dynamics of external migration is of great interest.

In the 1970s and 1980s, new construction projects played a special role in the growth of the region's population, among which the construction of the Baikal–Amur Mainline (BAM) stood out. In the areas where the highway was being built, migration activity was at a very high level: the migration turnover intensity coefficient (the number of arrivals and departures related to the average annual population) in 1980 was 29,4%. After the completion of construction work in 1985, the migration turnover intensity coefficient fell to 19,1%, and in 1990 it was 15,1% [Dyachenko, Burlaev, 2017].

In the 1990s, migration turned into a process leading to the population decline in the Far East. In the last decade, a decrease in both relative and absolute migration in the region has become a stable trend. For example, if in 1990 the total number of arrivals (taking into account intraregional migration) in the Amur Region was 77,5 thousand people, and those leaving – 71,7 thousand, then in the following years both flows significantly decreased. In 2011, arrivals amounted to 16.6 thousand, and departures to 20,4 thousand people; in 2021, the number of arrivals fell further to 11,3 thousand, and those leaving – 14.2 thousand people[1]. The intensity of migration turnover[2] (excluding migrants with a limited period of stay) has decreased over ten years from 45 migrants per thousand in 2011 to 33 in 2021 [Dyachenko, Lazareva, 2022b].

In general, a decrease in population outflow has been observed in the Far East as a whole. Over seven years, from 2014 to 2020, migration outflow in the region decreased by 2,5 times. In 2021, migration growth was recorded – due to a number of Far Eastern entities of the Russian Federation, where the number of arrivals exceeded the number of departures.

These trends can be examined in more detail using the example of the *Amur Region*.

First of all, it should be noted that in the Amur Region, in the 2011–2021 period, the average annual population has been consistently decreasing. The most important role in this was played by the outflow of population from the region as part of external migration, including population exchange with other regions of Russia, between the region and the CIS countries, and between the region and other foreign countries.

[1] In 2011, the methodology for collecting migration data changed. From 2011 data on migrants with a limited period of stay, as well as on migrants moving in rural areas within the boundaries of an administrative district was added.

[2] It is measured by the migration turnover coefficient, that is the ratio of migration turnover to the average (average annual) population, expressed in per thousand. – *Edit*.

The peak of migration in the Amur Region, both in terms of arrival and departure, occurred in 2015, after which a decline in the volume of migration (i.e. the sum of arrivals and departures) and the intensity of migration turnover in the region began.

The volume of migration increased from 51,637 people in 2011 to 65,616 people in 2015, then decreased and amounted to 46,398 people in 2021. Migration turnover increased from 62,6 per thousand in 2011 to 78,8 per thousand in 2015 and decreased to 59,7 per thousand in 2021. The population losses in the Amur Region as a result of migration outflow were the highest at the beginning of this period. The migration balance in 2011 was 6087 people, in 2021 it decreased to 2344 people [Amurskij statisticheskij ezhegodnik, 2021].

The dynamics of external migration in the Amur Region also looks like a wave. The highest rates for both arrival and departure occurred in the middle of the period under review, in 2015. A significant jump in the growth of migration in the region was noted in 2019, and its sharp decline occurred in 2021. The latter was most likely a consequence of restrictions on migration associated with the pandemic.

Migration surges in the period 2011–2021 were largely due to the growing number of people arriving in the region as a place of temporary residence. Their share in the total number of arrivals increased from 26,4% in 2011 to 45,5% in 2014 and 41,6% in 2015, amounting to 30,3% in 2021. It appears that such dynamics of statistically recorded migration is largely associated with the spread of the shift work method, which uses the labor of migrants with a short period of stay, which is not taken into account in the current statistical reporting on migration by the Internal Affairs Directorate.

In recent years, the overall external (for the region) migration has stabilized, amounting to 41–42% of those arriving and 46–49% of those leaving in 2015–2021 (in 2019, the surge in the number of external migrants among those arriving reached 47,5% due to a sharp influx of labor migrants from the CIS and other foreign countries).

Of the total number of migrants, those arriving from other regions of the country accounted for 34,2% in 2021, from the CIS countries – 6,8%, from other foreign countries – 0,4%. Among those leaving, the share of migrants heading to other regions of the country was significantly higher, amounting to 43,7%. 2,8% of migrants left for the CIS countries, and 0,5% of migrants left for other foreign countries [Amurskij statisticheskij ezhegodnik, 2021].

Migration exchange with other Russian regions is not in favor of the Amur Region, resulting in an outflow of population. A significant portion of those leaving the Amur Region (in 2021, over 39% of migrants) choose neighboring territories of the Siberian and Far Eastern Federal Districts.

On the contrary, migration exchange with the CIS countries since 2012 (except for 2020) has ensured the growth of the population of the Amur Region. The region's most active migration ties are with Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia, with the registered migration increase in 2021 of 254, 237 and 153 people, respectively (Table 2).

Table 2

Migration balance between the Amur region and the CIS countries, people*

Countries	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Belarus	–2	–11	3	12	11	27	–5	34	–29	3
Moldova	8	16	21	42	31	219	–13	2	1	5
Ukraine	18	10	205	565	416	19	–101	–11	–91	4
Azerbaijan	8	32	40	29	43	69	25	72	20	34
Armenia	151	118	211	174	122	245	29	203	–176	153
Kyrgyzstan	32	39	550	–357	60	2	32	585	–617	237
Tajikistan	53	63	137	94	89	163	111	446	274	254
Turkmenistan	5	–	10	5	–	–3	1	26	–20	7
Uzbekistan	125	75	398	–85	67	113	25	225	62	28
Kazakhstan	24	45	36	56	83	96	81	398	–346	77
Total	422	387	1611	535	922	950	185	1980	–922	802

* Calculated by the authors based on: [Amurskij statisticheskij ezhegodnik, 2021].

When evaluating external migration, it is important to have an idea of the changes in the structure of flows, of different types of migrant registration. The data for the Amur Region are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

The share of arriving and departing external migrants by type of registration for the period 2017–2021, %*

Years	Of total arriving migrants			Of total departing migrants		
	registered at the new place of residence	returned to their place of residence after a temporary stay in another territory	arrived at the place of stay – total	de-registered at previous place of residence	left the territory of temporary residence for the previous place of residence upon expiration of the term	left the place of residence for the place of stay – total
2017	25,2	37,5	37,3	41,9	24,6	33,5
2018	28,0	37,4	34,5	43,2	29,6	27,2
2019	20,7	31,8	47,5	39,4	32,3	28,3
2020	25,1	40,7	34,2	35,2	41,3	23,5
2021	29,8	39,9	30,3	49,5	18,9	31,6
On average for the period 2017–2021	25,4	37,1	37,5	41,6	29,6	28,7

* Calculated by the authors based on: [Amurskij statisticheskij ezhegodnik, 2021].

Among those arriving in the region over the period 2017–2021, more than a quarter (25,4%) were persons registered at their new place of residence, which allows them to be considered new settlers [Dyachenko, Burlaev, 2020]. More than a third of newcomers (37,1%) were those who returned to their place of residence after a temporary stay in another territory (return migration) and about 38% were those who arrived at their place of stay for a certain period (Table 3).

Among the outgoing migrants, a different ratio is observed. There are significantly more (41,6%) of those who cancelled registration at their previous place of residence, slightly fewer (29,6%) who left for their previous place of residence from the territory of temporary stay upon completion of the term, and those who left from their place of residence to their place of stay (28,7%) (Table 3).

In the period from 2017 to 2021, 14,018 more people were deregistered from their place of residence in the Amur Region than were accepted for registration. The total migration population loss over five years amounted to 10,972 people [Dyachenko, Burlaev, 2020].

The results of statistical employment surveys of the population in the Amur Region make it possible to assess the scale, structure and effectiveness of pendulum and seasonal external migration in the region. Thus, in 2020, 11,1 thousand people entered the region from other entities of the Russian Federation to work, and 4,3 thousand people left. The positive balance of external labor migration amounted to 6,8 thousand workers [Dyachenko, Burlaev, 2020].

It should be noted that temporary labor migration, despite seasonal (annual) fluctuations, has a smooth upward trend. If in 2011 the number of people who entered the region to work was 3,9 thousand people, and the number of people who left it was 4,1 thousand people (negative balance – 0,2 thousand people), then in 2014, respectively, 5,3 thousand people entered and 3,3 thousand people left (positive balance – 2,0 thousand people), in 2018, 9,3 thousand people entered the region from other territories of Russia to work, and 4,5 thousand people left (positive balance of 4,8 thousand people) [Dyachenko, Burlaev, 2020]. The external influx of labor force makes helps to reduce labor shortage in the regional economy.

Conclusion

The conducted analysis shows that external migration in the Far East is currently stabilizing. Incoming migration from foreign countries grows and reduces the overall migration loss of the population.

In the territorial mobility of the population, the zone of movements that are not subject to current statistical accounting is expanding – as a result of the increased pendulum and seasonal migration, the spread of shift and expedition-shift methods of conducting work in the construction and extraction industries.

In the short and medium term, no significant increase in the number of new settlers is expected that would reverse the trend of population decline in the region. At the same time, the share of the population arriving in the region for a temporary job continues to increase.

The observed trends in the territorial and labor mobility of the region's population indicate that the effectiveness of state and municipal management in the area of employment remains at a level that does not meet the needs of territorial development. In particular, the expansion of employment outside residence places deserves wider application in the practice of state management. For example, the involvement of teachers in rural schools does not necessarily have to be associated with life in rural areas. Transport accessibility of a rural school for a teacher living in the city may be quite sufficient. The same applies to the work of doctors in rural health care institutions.

The solution to the personnel shortage in rural areas can be facilitated by the expansion of the distant work of highly qualified specialists and by the increase in the construction of rental housing in resettlement centers that can serve as bases for rural areas. The formation of rental housing complexes in the Far East region will also stimulate the influx from other regions of the country of personnel ready for temporary employment. The development of regional development centers, it seems, deserves no less attention than the creation of priority development areas and the placement of new industries.

The existing significant differences in the natural and mechanical movement of people within municipalities prove the need for a differentiated approach to managing their economic and social development. This can be accomplished using municipal statistics data, which allows taking into account the specifics of processes occurring in individual settlements.

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