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EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF ECOMIGRATION REPRESENTATION IN THE GEORGIAN PRESS

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines and evaluates the characteristics of the Georgian press's coverage of the issues faced by eco-migrants who have been resettled from Adjara. The objective of the investigation is to ascertain the manner in which the media portrays the eco-migration process, resettlement policy, and government priorities in relation to this matter. What thematic issues does it address and to what extent does it accurately represent the social, economic, and cultural realities of eco-migrants? The article employs content and discourse analysis methodologies to analyse materials from specific Georgian media outlets. The results acquired indicate that the Georgian press primarily discusses the issue of eco-migration episodically and frequently in an ideological format, which hinders the public from gaining a comprehensive understanding of the problem. The paper underscores the media's responsibility and role in the objective and systematic coverage of the eco-migration topic.

KEYWORDS

Ecomigration, Media, Politics, Press, Government

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Introduction

The media plays a critical role in the discussion of ecomigration issues, as it is responsible for influencing the public's perception, comprehension, and political agenda. Journalism must not only report facts but also analyse the context and causes of ecomigration, a forced displacement induced by environmental, social, and economic factors. Complex reporting is necessary.

The media is responsible for informing society about the causes of ecomigration, including natural disasters, soil erosion, climate change, and habitat degradation. Additionally, it discloses human stories that lend a social dimension to the ecological issues.

The media's influence on the public perception, comprehension, and political agenda of ecomigration issues is of critical importance. A complex reporting approach is necessary for ecomigration, which is a forced displacement resulting from environmental, social, and economic factors. Journalism should not only report on the facts, but also analyse the context and causes of the issue.

In addition to informing society about the causes of ecomigration, which include natural disasters, soil erosion, climate change, and habitat degradation, the media also shares human experiences that lend a social dimension to the ecological issue.

The main research questions: to ascertain the specific reasons that led to ecomigration, the factors that determined the primary directions, the political and social repercussions that were considered when determining the direction of ecomigration, the contradictory factors identified in the area of reflection, the cultural and social mismatches that occurred between migrants and settlers, the primary priorities of state policy and the challenges that the ongoing process faced, the relevance of the government's involvement, the objective of generalising the ongoing processes, and the stages that were distinguished according to the press in relation to migration policy.

Research methodology: The research methodology is founded on the comprehensive examination and analysis of press materials that pertain to the procedure of resettling eco-migrants from Adjara to various regions of Georgia, as well as the dynamics of the primary trends in contemporary eco-migration. Identifying the function of social media in the dissemination of information regarding the issue. Utilising the aforementioned methodologies, we endeavoured to address the subsequent enquiries:

- What was the primary purpose for the resettlement of eco-migrants?
- Was the resettlement conducted in groups or individually?
- The resettlement was conducted either autonomously or with the assistance of the state.
- To what extent did the state assume responsibility for this matter?
- What was the extent of the press coverage of the extant challenges?

Main findings:

The subject of eco-migrants in Adjara has a lengthy and significant history, as the region is frequently affected by natural disasters such as floods, mudslides, and landslides, which are a result of its geographical location. This was particularly acute during the Soviet period and subsequent years, as the population residing in the mountainous region of Adjara was compelled to evacuate their villages.

As evidenced by press materials (newspaper „Soviet Adjara,,Communist"), the extensive resettlement of eco-migrants commenced in Upper Adjara (Khulo, Shuakhevi, Keda) during the 1980s. The primary areas of resettlement were Kakheti, Guria, and Kvemo Kartli (Dmanisi, Bolnisi, Marneuli). In the 1990s, these processes were further intensified by the convergence of ecological issues and labour migration processes.

The subsequent period encompasses the 2000s. In 2004, approximately 150 villages in Adjara were classified as ecologically hazardous, according to official data. In 2010, the state initiated a more systematic approach to the issue of eco-migrants by establishing a program that involved the relocation of families to new villages and accommodations.

Consequently, the mass media has addressed the issue of eco-migrants from Adjara in a variety of methods over the years. For instance, the issue was highly pertinent during the Soviet Union in the 1970s; however, the press of that era processed it in a manner that revealed relatively little material. The media was subject to stringent regulation, and there was minimal coverage of these matters. Consequently, the press of that era contains either a scarcity of or no information regarding eco-migrants from Adjara.

It is also important to mention that the term "eco-migrant" was not yet extensively used in the 1970s. Lester Brown, an employee of the Worldwatch Institute, implemented it initially in the 1970s [4]. Nevertheless,

the term has not yet been legally defined. The term "eco-migration" was employed during the Soviet era in lieu of phrases such as "the necessity for socialist construction," "state interests," and "placement in accordance with the plan."

The topic of eco-migrants was frequently employed by mass media, including newspapers, radio, and films, to illustrate the effectiveness of Soviet policy. For instance, films and reports frequently depicted the "new life" of eco-migrants and their involvement in the "socialist construction" process. The media frequently depicted eco-migrants as members of a "young socialist society" that was effectively assimilating into the new environment. The genuine issues faced by eco-migrants, including job shortages, culture shock, and living conditions, were frequently disregarded in this type of coverage.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that this frequently contradicted the official Soviet narrative, certain media outlets continued to attempt to depict the genuine circumstances of eco-migrants.

Newspapers such as "Communist," "Soviet Adjara," and "Lenin's Flag" addressed eco-migration issues during the 1970s and 1980s. Nevertheless, as previously indicated, the information was limited and primarily focused on the positive aspects of the "new life" of eco-migrants, their adaptation to the local population, and the environmental conditions of Kvemo Kartli or Kakheti. As previously remarked, the Soviet press consistently endeavoured to portray the deportation as a "socialist victory." [2]

The Georgian media space's coverage of ecomigration issues can be categorised into three categories based on its intensity:

Soviet newspapers seldom furnished us with information regarding ecomigration during the initial period, which spanned from the 1950s to 1985. The primary cause of this was likely state policy, as the destruction of the residential basis is a complex and contradictory process. Soviet ideology made every effort to present the issue in a different light and to associate it with the "welfare of the Soviet people." For instance, the newspaper "Communist" frequently published articles about new settlements, in which it depicted ecomigrants as successful architects of collective farms. "Adjaris Furtslebi" (Adjara Pages) was a newspaper that explicitly addressed families that were forcibly displaced as a result of landslides in Adjara. However, the content was propagandistic, with the headline "State care for new homes and a bright future..." Large-scale projects were covered by the republican press ("Zarya Vostoka," "Soviet Georgia"), which emphasised the construction of housing for eco-migrants as a component of "socialist progress." Simultaneously, it was consistent with the issue of addressing the labour scarcity in other regions of Georgia.[1]

This is the reason why the state is already demonstrating an active interest in the planned settlement model. Additionally, motivational conditions are being established to pique the interest of eco-migrants. "The State Committee for the Use of Labour Resources suggests that workers residing on scarce and low-yielding lands, primarily in inaccessible mountains, relocate to certain regions of Georgia in order to establish permanent employment and residence. These regions offer fertile land and a greater number of opportunities for them to participate in public work." Schools, hospitals, shops, cultural centres or clubs, libraries, and other religious service institutions will greet the settlers. Additionally, the roads will be well-equipped. The state enhances the living conditions of individuals who desire to settle without charge and provides the following benefits: a newly settled family will be exempt from annual taxes for a period of five years, and land will be allocated to the household in accordance with the current norm. As stated, urban families who desire to relocate to agricultural regions are eligible for all of the aforementioned advantages, with the exception of the expenses associated with transporting family property to their new residence.[11]

Consequently, the Soviet press exclusively depicted ecomigration in a positive and ideologically charged light, while the quotidian challenges faced by individuals were rendered invisible.

The press's coverage of ecomigration in Georgia underwent a significant transformation during the second period, which spanned from 1985 to 2000. Gorbachev's "perestroika" and glasnost enabled journalists to more openly enquire about the situation of the population affected by ecological catastrophes, whereas previously, such issues were only addressed in the context of the state's "care" and "socialist progress" under Soviet propaganda.

"Soviet Adjara" newspaper, Wednesday, July 19, 1989, issue #137. The article "Adjarian settles in a new home" informs the reader of the calamity that occurred in the mountainous regions of Adjara in the spring of this year, which resulted in the displacement of thousands of families and the loss of lives. Georgia as a whole rose to its feet during this period of adversity, and the process of resettling Adjarians in its various regions commenced. This procedure is not straightforward. It is challenging to depart from the residences of one's parents, but it is simpler to establish oneself in one's homeland. A multitude of materials regarding this subject were additionally published in our publication. It was unimaginable in any other scenario. In our

blessed Georgia, no one thought otherwise; everything is lawful. A brother embraced his brother, shared his food with him, shared his pain, and helped him endure hardship.

The article also states that "a significant amount of effort has been expended to resolve settlement issues." It is imperative to underscore that the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia and the Council of Ministers of the Georgian SSR are responsible for the direct management of this matter. Certainly, the Adjara Regional Committee of the Party, the administration of the autonomous republic, and the executive committees of the Khulo, Shuakhevi, and Keda district councils of the Party are all responsible for this extremely challenging task on a daily basis. [12]

It is also documented in which villages ecomigration occurred, the amount of funding the state allocated from the budget to assist them, and the future plans. "480 households have been established in seven villages of Akhalkalaki (Azmani, Apnia, Okami, Kotelia, Chunchkha, Gogasheni, Ptena) to date, and their land plots have been measured." Out of these, 100 households have already arrived and are residing in their respective locations. The remainder will be delivered subsequent to the completion of residential housing construction. Men from more than 200 households are engaged in the construction of their own homes.[12]

The Rustaveli Society "Javakheti" was established to assist the migrants, and it was also actively involved in assisting the new settlers, as demonstrated in the article..." The Rustaveli Society of Georgia established the association "Javakheti" with the intention of offering substantial support to the settlers in Javakheti. The entire republic has risen to its feet in Tbilisi, and this will be further bolstered by actions. Additionally, they received financial assistance: "Those who have already established themselves in areas that are susceptible to landslides and avalanches are granted concurrent financial assistance of 800 rubles per household." The Union Government allotted 500 rubles, while the Trade Union Council of Georgia allocated 300 rubles. Furthermore, households that have relocated to the Akhalkalaki and Bogdanovka districts will receive an additional 1,200 rubles per household, and one dekuil will be provided at no cost.

The press of the 1980s, particularly the newspaper "Soviet Adjara," was the voice of the Adjarian people, as previously indicated. The newspaper frequently addressed issues and challenges related to ecomigration. For instance, "Akhalkalaki: Let us provide Adjarians with apartments in a timely manner" is an intriguing article in this context. ("Soviet Adjara", #141 (18.294, July 25, 1989)

In particular, "... numerous districts of the republic, including the Akhalkalaki district, are extending invitations to Adjarians who have been rendered homeless." In this location, they have identified resources for building materials and personnel, as well as allocated land for development.

However, it would be inaccurate to assert that the region was left to its own devices, with the individuals in distress and their issues. Everyone convened to conduct business, as the saying goes. There was virtually no ministry, agency, or large enterprise in the republic that did not participate in the design, construction, delivery, or supply of materials, mechanisms, or industrial goods. This work is being completed urgently, as winter is imminent in the mountains, and there is a great deal to be done in the few months before the cold weather sets in.[3]

Naturally, the press expresses its perspective on the current issues and emphasizes that "it is imperative that we vigorously refute the completely unfounded rumours that Adjarians who were rendered homeless as a result of the disaster are currently homeless." Initially, the victims have been allocated accommodations at the Javakheti Kela tourist resort, hotel, sanatoriums, rest houses, and lodging houses in the Khelvachauri and Kobuleti regions, as well as Batumi. The males are engaged in the construction of apartments for their families, while the elderly, women, and children reside there. By the way, they are compensated at the current rates for this.

The press's discussion of the social and economic circumstances of eco-migrants, their integration processes in the new environment, and the assistance programs provided by the state contributed to the public's awareness and the drawing of attention to the issues..[1]

An intriguing article in this regard is "Settlement Continues" ("Settlement Continues", Newspaper "Sabchota Adjara", #143 (18.296), July 28, 1989), which asserts that "...it is imperative to systematically furnish the populace with comprehensive information on specific matters through mass media (press, television, radio), beginning with the acquisition of residential properties in various regions of Georgia, which is the most convenient housing option for the populace."

As previously indicated, the press published materials during this period that discussed the construction of new housing and the actual challenges that individuals encountered. The newspapers "Zarya Vostoka" and "Sovetskaya Gruzia" frequently detailed the magnitude of natural disasters, including landslides in Adjara, Svaneti, Racha, and Guria. They also underscored the state's efforts to relocate the population. However, for

the first time, a narrative emerged that also addressed the dissatisfaction of citizens, including the quality of housing, the scarcity of land plots, and the challenge of adjusting to the new environment.[2]

The public is aware that, in certain regions of Georgia, the allocation of homestead sites is limited due to the scarcity of land, despite the strong desire and support of the local population. As an alternative, residential properties are acquired in these regions through government-issued long-term loans. The procedure of transferring homestead lands for personal use is complicated by the small landholdings, as evidenced by this article. Consequently, the state government's policy is to identify solutions to the issue through the issuance of affordable credits, which allows the eco-migrant to acquire land at their discretion. In other words, the government policy currently grants the eco-migrant financial assistance and the responsibility to independently resolve the issue. For instance, "As you have discovered from the information provided today, the issuance of credits will commence in the second decade of August." The local branches of the Savings Bank are aware of this, and the local press also informs the population of the regions. [14]

The article also mentions that a portion of the population in the mountainous Adjara region expressed interest in purchasing homes. Specifically, "1,471 families from the Khulo, Shuakhevi, and Keda districts expressed interest in purchasing houses with the materials available." Currently, 943 families are awaiting a loan, while the remaining families are in the process of purchasing a home. The Council of Ministers of the Georgian SSR has already approved and allocated a long-term loan of 23 million 80 thousand rubles for those who have resolved in accordance with the aforementioned procedure (for the purchase of houses). We will receive an additional 6 million 20 thousand rubles. Certainly, credits may also be granted to families that have been granted land holdings and are in the process of constructing homes.[4]

One of the articles, "We Visited New Settlements," discusses specific individuals who settled in the village of Zvindari in the Vani region as a result of state support. "Those who wished to could purchase pre-made houses," stated T. Diasamidze, "but I opted to construct them myself in accordance with a project initiated by local architects." Shukri Beridze, a villager from my hometown, is constructing a residence adjacent to mine. We will be neighbours, as we were in our ancestral village. [18]

The eco-migrants have been warmly welcomed by the local population, as evidenced by the article: "The local residents have also welcomed us as relatives, and the entire village is helping us build houses." In addition, we are aware of the district leadership's backing and the support of local economic organisations. Near our settlement, an asphalt road, water supply, and electricity have already been installed. If the current situation persists, we will extend an invitation to you to relocate to a home that is both comfortable and convenient at the start of the following year.

The press also extensively disseminated materials regarding the construction of dwellings for the Adjarian population in uninhabited villages in Samtskhe-Javakheti, as evidenced by the processed materials. For instance, the article "On the Ancient Land of Javakheti" describes Okami as the rural council's administrative centre, situated on the Akhalkalaki plateau and upstream of the Okami River. Three localities of this council are Apnia, Gogasheni, and Kartsebi. Okami is situated at an elevation of 1,740 meters above sea level, a distance of 10 kilometres from Akhalkalaki. The village is home to a Soviet farm that specialises in livestock and dairy products, as well as an eight-year-old school. "The construction of Adjarian houses in Okami is advancing at a rapid pace... 120 Adjarian families will establish themselves in this village." [15]

It is evident from the aforementioned article that the housing arrangements in seven villages of Akhalkalaki—Ptena, Okami, Afnia, Gogasheni, Kartsebi, Azmana, and Chunchkha—commenced concurrently in order to promptly accommodate eco-migrants. Nevertheless, it is also intriguing that despite the current political censorship, issues are noted with great severity: "... The republic's grand construction (a name that would be fitting) is impeded by a number of factors, and we will not remain silent about them." For example, a few days ago, there was a shortage of cement. Despite the fact that a sufficient quantity has been received, the decision was made to transport it to Akhalkalaki in waggons, with the constructors themselves responsible for its protection. This was done in order to prevent the delay from recurrent.

The constructors in the village of Chunchkha are impeded by the high-voltage and communication lines that were previously in place. The pertinent agencies were directed to relocate them; however, this matter has yet to be resolved. In our presence, the population was instructed to provide the press by carrying it to the site, as the arriving population lacks the number of magazines and periodicals. [15]

A comparable issue is illustrated in the article "Let us Build Apartments for Adjara Residents in Time," which asserts that the government possesses all the necessary resources to construct villages for the affected population. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that the absence of socio-cultural facilities today does not necessarily prevent their construction in the future. The local government assures the population that the

construction will continue without issue and that they will have access to residential houses, medical centres, schools, and libraries. They also promise that those who have relocated to new locations will have access to libraries, clubs, baths, and other amenities of civilisation. However, the passage of time is exceedingly rapid today. It appears that the government has resorted to "explaining" the issues that have been published in the press. "We must firmly reject the absolutely unfounded rumours that Adjarians who were left homeless due to the disaster are now on the streets." Initially, the victims have been allocated all of the tourist facilities, hotels, and sanatoriums in Javakheti, as well as all of the boarding houses, rest houses, and sanatoriums in the Khelvachauri and Kobuleti regions and Batumi. The males are engaged in the construction of apartments for their families, while the elderly, women, and children reside there. By the way, they are compensated at the current rates for this.[13]

It appears that the press is continuing to identify issues in other publications due to the urgency of the issue: "...The competent concentration of forces enables the various organisations that are leading the construction - the Transcaucasian Trans-Caucasian Tunnel Construction Company, the Central Railway, and the Kutaisi Electromechanical Plant - to act synchronously and purposefully." Additionally, students from a variety of higher educational institutions in the republic participate in the labour semester at this location. Simultaneously, the meeting addressed the challenges encountered by construction sites, including the Marabda-Akhalkalaki railway line, which is experiencing operational delays and provides inert materials and other cargo to these sites. The housing issues of construction workers are severe; there is a shortage of canteens, and they are frequently situated in buildings that are not adequate for this purpose. In these circumstances, it is imperative to implement rigorous sanitation regulations and guarantee that construction workers receive prompt and competent medical attention. During the session, strategies were devised to promptly resolve "bottlenecks" in the provision of accommodation to Adjarian families. The appropriate organisations and agencies were assigned specific tasks, and the deadlines and individuals responsible for their completion were established. [17]

The government's involvement in ecomigration is still active, as evidenced by the newspaper materials, despite the emergence of a number of issues. The state policy regarding this issue is clearly defined.

The local government is diligently addressing social issues by collaborating with journalists and providing a comprehensive description of a variety of topics. For instance, "...in zeindari, amagleba, gora, shuamta, mtis dziri and other villages of the vani region, more than 280 adjarian families affected by natural disasters currently live," as noted by badri meburishvili, the acting chairman of the executive committee for ecomigrants settled in the vani region, in one of the newspaper issues. Nearly one and a half thousand individuals require assistance. However, they also anticipate substantial assistance from them in the district. Initially, the population migration from mountainous regions is partially resolved by the resettled individuals. For instance, we were planning to close the school in the village of Onjokheti; however, it is now operational due to the arrival of new students from Adara, who will be enrolled in various classes beginning with the new academic year.

Despite the fact that a number of issues are arising in this period regarding ecomigration, the government's involvement is still active, and the state policy regarding this problem is clearly delineated, as evidenced by the newspaper materials.

Various issues are being described in detail, and the local government is systematically working to solve social problems by collaborating with journalists. For example, in one of the newspaper issues, badri meburishvili, the acting chairman of the executive committee for ecomigrants settled in the vani region, observed that "...in zeindari, amagleba, gora, shuamta, mtis dziri and other villages of the vani region, more than 280 adjarian families affected by natural disasters currently live." It is nearly one and a half thousand individuals who require assistance. But in the district, they also anticipate a significant amount of assistance from them. First and foremost, the population migration from mountainous regions is partially resolved by the resettled individuals. For instance, we were planning to close the school in the village of Onjokheti; however, it is now operational due to the arrival of new students from Adara. These students will enrol in various classes beginning with the new academic year. [19]

The issues of ecomigration were once again pertinent in the early 1990s, following Georgia's reestablishment of independence. The confluence of ecological disasters, civil conflicts, and economic crises resulted in significant population displacement. The fate of those who were displaced from Adjara as a result of landslides became a particularly pressing issue. Although the "temporary" housing frequently did not become property for years, thousands of families were compelled to relocate to transitory settlements in Kvemo Kartli and Shida Kartli. These issues were extensively reported by the press, including "Republika," "Akhali

Taoba," "24 Saati," and regional publications, frequently in a critical manner. The headlines of the articles included phrases such as "Population awaits promised house," "Temporary home has been in temporary status for the tenth year," and "People who survived the disaster became victims of state negligence." [6]

If the Soviet press exclusively depicted an idealised image, the independent Georgian press commenced the telling of individual accounts. Journalists recounted the experiences of families whose children were raised in dilapidated barracks, where new migrants frequently encountered tense relationships with the local population, and where social assistance that was promised was not promptly provided. The population did not receive the promised dwellings, state funding was lost, and there was no clear plan for the redistribution of the population. Journalistic investigations have emerged on these issues of ecomigration.

Simultaneously, the media began to underscore the international context. Journalists no longer regarded ecomigration as a local issue; rather, they framed it as a component of global ecological challenges and climate change. Nevertheless, the local crisis remained the primary focus of the press in the 1990s, as thousands of families were left destitute and anticipated state assistance.

Particularly important publications:

✓ "Republic" newspaper, 1993 "The disaster necessitated the relocation of thousands of families from Adjara to new settlements." Nevertheless, the population resides in temporary quarters, and the houses that were promised are still under construction. Families state that the assistance is inadequate and is only partially implemented. The state remains committed to providing comprehensive support to the displaced; however, the prospect of residing in impermanent accommodations presents a significant obstacle. [20]

✓ "Akhali Taoba" newspaper, 1995 "The villages that were impacted by the landslide are seeking a new life in Adjara." The construction of new residences is being actively participated in by displaced families; however, many are unable to complete the project on time. The adaptation process is significantly impeded by the fact that children attend school in temporary facilities. According to local authorities, the quality of life will progressively improve. [21]

✓ "24 Hours" newspaper, 1998 - "Temporarily, hundreds of families from Racha relocated to lowland regions." Some individuals were unable to receive assistance within the framework of state programs, while the majority of individuals remained destitute. This issue is pertinent not only in Adjara, but also in Svaneti, Guria, and other regions of Western Georgia. According to journalistic investigations, the absence of infrastructure, timely assistance, and social protection gaps continue to be acute issues. [22]

✓ "Adjara Pages," 1990s "The population, which has been confined to their villages as a consequence of the disaster, continues to reside in temporary barracks." Although the compounds are reportedly in poor condition, there is a lack of water and electricity, and there are insufficient schools and clinics, the promise of state assistance has been partially fulfilled. According to local residents, their lives are still characterised by a perpetual struggle: they are in search of a home, employment, and education. [23]

Consequently, the years 1985–2000 marked a significant turning point in the examination of ecomigration issues. In lieu of positive propaganda, the press adopted critical approaches, the displaced were addressed in a mass manner, and a public discourse regarding the state's accountability commenced. Ecomigration was already perceived as a systemic solution, rather than a one-time catastrophe, as a persistent social and political challenge.

The unsystematic nature of the political approach to ecomigration is the subject of intense discussion in the press during the third period, which also occurred in the 2000s. The inconsistency of the resettlers' reasons and objectives is evident in the examination of newspaper materials. The establishment of suitable conditions for the adaptation and residency of ecomigrants is not considered. In particular, the convergence of economic and ethnographic cultures, the establishment of conditions for social adaptation and satisfaction, and even the primary conditions for habitation. The aforementioned reasons are a significant impediment to the integration of migrants in their new location and, in many instances, serve as the impetus for re-migration. A number of articles that were published in a variety of periodicals during this period are particularly intriguing to illustrate:

1. Adjara eco-migrants have been residing in Tsalka, in the village of Gumbati, for several decades. They were compelled to relocate from Adjara as a result of land scarcity or erosion. In the village of Gumbati, the state has relocated eco-migrants into dwellings that were abandoned by the Greeks. The majority of the Adjara families have not yet acquired proprietorship of these residences. The eco-migrants are perpetually preoccupied with the dread that the previous owners of the houses will return at some point, necessitating their relocation to a different location.

Each family was allocated one hectare of land upon their arrival in Tsalka; however, this amount is inadequate for agricultural families. In addition, the village's fundamental infrastructure is experiencing significant issues, as it is virtually devoid of gas and water.[24]

2. "Eco-migrants from Tsalka" - For years, approximately 3,000 eco-migrant families who have established themselves in the Tsalka municipality have been endeavouring to address the challenges of appropriate housing, integration, education, employment, health, and social protection. The intensification of natural processes resulted in the harm and destruction of the homes of the majority of the families in the mountainous regions of Adjara, Racha, and Svaneti. In 1998, the state initiated the process of resettling them in the abandoned homes of the ethnic Greek population in Tsalka. This process has since continued to progress. Concurrently, a number of the families relocated to the Tsalka region. The state has not yet completed the process of purchasing residential properties and conveying ownership to the resettled families in the majority of cases. Consequently, the residences of these families continue to be owned by other private individuals. Tsalka The deputy governor of the municipality, in an interview with an EMC representative, stated that the state has acquired housing for approximately 571 families out of 3,000 thus far, and the process of transferring their proprietorship will commence in the near future. Recently, there has been an increase in the frequency of incidents that occur when the ethnic Greek population returns to their residences. Consequently, eco-migrant families are compelled to vacate their residences, resulting in their homelessness. In such instances, they are compelled to occupy an empty home or building. In numerous instances, eco-migrant families have been compelled to either return to their homes, which have been damaged by a natural calamity or are hazardous to their lives, or to establish themselves in a homeless settlement in the aforementioned "dream city" as a result of their homelessness.

The former hospital building is providing shelter to 30 eco-migrant families who have been rendered destitute as a result of the ethnic Greek population's return to the Tsalka municipality. For eight months, they have endured exceedingly challenging circumstances, which include the absence of electricity, water, sewerage, and natural gas. Socially vulnerable families are among the residents of the former hospital building, who have been deprived of social assistance and a source of income as a result of the expropriation of state-owned property. Families in the Tsalka municipality are confronted with integration challenges in addition to the scarcity of accommodation. The issues concerning employment, education, and access to arable land are of particular significance. The eco-migrant population of Tsalka informed EMC that the government had assured them of parcels of arable land, which would enable them to earn a subsistence income. Nevertheless, the lands that the state has allocated to them are primarily located at a great distance from their places of habitation, are impassable, and are rocky, rendering them unsuitable for cultivation. This is not only the case for agriculture, but also for grazing.

Access to educational institutions is also a challenge for eco-migrant families residing in Tsalka Municipality in terms of integration. In certain villages of Tsalka Municipality, there are no schools at all, necessitating students to travel considerable distances to obtain an education. The school infrastructure in numerous villages is in a state of disrepair. The educational process has been conducted in the residential building of an ethnic Greek private individual in the village of Imeri since the school building was destroyed several years ago. The learning process is complicated by the school's limited area and insufficient number of classrooms, as educators have observed.

The inaction of local and central authorities further complicates the situation of eco-migrants who have settled in Tsalka Municipality. The "Regulatory Commission for the Settlement of Families Affected by Natural Disasters and Subject to Displacement" established within the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories of Georgia is unable to adequately address the problems of eco-migrants living in the Tsalka municipality due to limited financial resources and legal and institutional shortcomings. Furthermore, the local municipality budget does not include the necessary appropriations for eco-migrants' integration support and assistance. [25]

3. Eco-migrants return to Adjara from Tsalka, accompanied by an unresponsive government. In 2007, President Mikheil Saakashvili personally extended an invitation to eco-migrants who were stranded in the open air to relocate to the houses that the Greeks had left in the villages of Tsalka municipality. The authorities agreed to cover the cost of the houses in the near future. According to the chairman of the Tsalka Sakrebulo, the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation, the government did cover the cost of the houses. However, the ministry's balance account only lists 571 houses, despite the fact that up to 2,400 eco-migrant families have settled in Tsalka. One of the families that were left destitute is Zurab Kakhadze, who relocated from the mountainous region of Adjara to the Tsalka municipality. The Greek proprietor visited him with the police and

forced him to vacate the residence. The Shainidze family, the owner's neighbour, is subject to the same demand. An additional 52 families in the village of Avranlo have been compelled to vacate their residences. In the past few days, the proprietor has issued the same request to approximately 50 families. In 2004, the Kakhadze family relocated from the mountainous Adjara region to the Tsalka municipality after President Mikheil Saakashvili visited Khulo and extended an offer: "The president personally informed the families that were unsheltered as a result of the landslide that houses had been purchased for them and that the state would cover the transportation costs if they relocated to Tsalka." However, they failed to provide us with the funds that were promised. We visited Tsalka at our own expense. Are you of the opinion that we desired to visit that location? We were compelled to do so. [26]

The media addressed the assistance programs and initiatives that were implemented by the state and non-governmental organisations to enhance the quality of life of eco-migrants.

The issue of eco-migration in Georgia was also the subject of interest for international organisations and media channels, which facilitated the acquisition of international support and increased global awareness of the topic. For instance, "HumanRights.ge" is an online publishing house. In one of the articles titled "Adjarian eco-migrants against the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation," the author states that the village of Gorolovka, located in the Ninotsminda district of Samtskhe-Javakheti, is home to approximately 300 families, among which are approximately one hundred families of eco-migrants from the Khulo district of Adjara. The primary source of their distress is the neglect of the previous administration during the Shevardnadze era. The ministry's neglect is the primary cause of the hazardous environment in which dozens of families of eco-migrants are currently residing in Adjara. As one individual stated, "I was resettled from the Khulo district in 2010." They informed me that they would provide me with a residence. Nazi Devadze informed me that the Zheriovka, or voting, was to be conducted, and he would provide me with a residence. I "live" during this period. While I await a residence, Devadze has already accommodated numerous families who relocated subsequent to my arrival. In private conversations, these families assert that they compensated him. We request that the ministry exercise caution. This situation has resulted in the displacement of numerous families. The lands are depicted as if they were distributed to individuals, when in actuality, only 4-5 farmers in the village possess all of the arable land. We request assistance and clarification from the new government regarding this matter. Temur Beridze, an eco-migrant, asserts that they can at least observe the number of eco-migrants who have returned to Adjara and are currently residing in a perilous environment. He maintains that the distribution of houses and land is inequitable, and occasionally, these advantages are amassed by individuals who are not eco-migrants.

The media has covered the issue of ecomigration in Georgia on an unprecedented scale since 2000, which is distinguished from previous periods by its critical and multi-platform approach. The topic of ecomigration was primarily discussed in newspapers and the republican press from 1985 to 2000. However, it has become a common occurrence in social and broadcast media since the 2000s. A variety of materials regarding the population displacement caused by landslides and natural calamities in Adjara and Svaneti were published in periodicals. The articles detailed the lives of families residing in temporary quarters, the challenging conditions in which children attend school, and the incomplete receipt of social assistance and state funding.

Mass media, particularly Facebook and Instagram, emerged as a new platform for the population to express their concerns, distribute video and photo materials about surviving families, and participate in activist campaigns. This led to the mobilisation of local authorities and the non-governmental sector, and contributed to the immediate support of citizens.

A perfect information mechanism that integrates local, regional, and international experience is created by the combination of social networks, press, and television. A systemic, long-term response is necessary to address ecomigration, which is perceived as a protracted social challenge. The media ensures that the issue is consistently at the forefront of the public's attention and the attention of decision-making institutions.

Conclusions

Consequently, the examination of press materials demonstrates that the press's discussion, interpretation, ideological approaches, and resettlement policy regarding ecomigration issues can be divided into multiple periods. At the initial stage (presumably from the 1920s to the 1960s), the press contains minimal content, which enables us to infer that the state does not prioritise this issue at this time and it is not the primary focus. Resettlement occurred, albeit in a spontaneous and unorganised manner.

The second stage of the analysis of the same press materials enables us to draw the conclusion that the state's interest in these issues is increasing. This is likely due to the fact that the construction of Soviet farms and collective farms in other regions of Georgia, which necessitate a workforce, has commenced. Additionally, a situation has arisen in which the Soviet government's objectives are in complete alignment with the causes and issues of ecology migration. Consequently, ecomigration assumes a structured and methodical nature. Simultaneously, the subject of ecomigration is presented in an ideological context rather than in a genuine social context as a result of state policy. The primary narrative was shaped by "state care" and "new opportunities," while the scope of natural disasters and the challenges faced by the population were less prominently featured.

More specifically, during the Soviet era, ecomigration concerns could be classified as follows:

- Ecomigration was frequently depicted as "planned resettlement," "relocation to new lands," or "settlement in new villages."
- The emphasis was on "state care," as if it were a means of progress and a better existence.
- The magnitude of landslides and natural disasters was infrequently or never addressed.
- The term "ecomigrant" was rarely employed; instead, they frequently employed the terms "resettlers," "young families," and "collective farmers who relocated to a new settlement."
- The resettled population in new villages was depicted as "enthusiastic collective farmers" in newspapers and television.
- Reports regarding the organisation of residences in a new location, the cultivation of land, and the "welcome of the host population" were issued on a rare occasion.
- Social tension and adaptation challenges were not publicly addressed. Political interests prevented the examination of genuine challenges.

At the third stage, it is evident that ecomigration is once again assuming an unorganised, unsystematic nature, as evidenced by the same press and social media materials. The establishment of suitable conditions for the adaptation and residency of ecomigrants is not considered. The transfer of insufficient land for farming, the transfer of existing houses, the definition of conditions for social adaptation, and the satisfaction of even fundamental housing conditions are all important factors. In numerous instances, the aforementioned factors serve as the foundation for return migration and present a significant impediment to the integration of migrants in their respective locations. The media primarily employs the frameworks of "moral responsibility" and "human interest," which frequently depict ecomigrants as passive victims and decision-makers as active and responsible individuals.

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