

Research Article

Equifinality of Population Dynamics in Georgia, 1980-2020: Implications for Planning and Development

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Abstract

Counter-urbanization or regional decentralization since the late 1970s in the United States initiated the polarization reversal tendencies and the decentralization of population, commercial, and industrial activities to the suburbs, intermediate-sized cities, and small towns. Is the present phase of migration and settlement a myth or reality in the State of Georgia? The study analyzed the recent population movement and dynamics in Georgia using the counties and their cities as units of analysis. The study was exploratory and explanatory in nature, using descriptive statistics such as totals, ratios, averages, and tables and graphs. The research effort established the final destination of migrants from urban as well as rural areas, therefore the concept of “equifinality.” The study supports the counter-urbanization theorization, whereby the small and middle-sized cities in the orbits of large central cities of the metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) grow at the expense of the large cities’ population decline or stagnation or modest growth.

Keywords

Urbanization, Counterurbanization, Regional Decentralization, Deurbanization, Counterurbanites, Migration, Push and Pull Drivers, Equifinality

1. Introduction

Since the 1970s in United States (U.S), counter-urbanization had replaced urbanization as the dominant force shaping the nation’s settlement system. This experience is not unique to U.S but also witnessed in other Western nations. Urbanization in a sense is characterized by increasing size, density, and heterogeneity of a settlement. It implies a movement from a state of less concentration to a state of more concentration. Thus, a process of population concentration. Counter-urbanization is a process by which the populations of large cities decline or stagnate while the populations of the surrounding small and middle-sized/intermediate-sized cities and towns

grow. The growth of these smaller settlements is at the expense of the large cities’ decline.

Thus, Counter-urbanization is characterized by decreasing size, density, and heterogeneity.

It is a process of population deconcentrating [5]. The orthodox urbanization process had almost been rendered obsolete by the current counter-urbanization.

In the U.S, metropolitan areas grew less rapidly than the nation, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, and had lost population to non-metropolitan/micropolitan territories. Migration out of the large cities has been selective of particular social and economic groups; very specific subgroups have been left

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behind. In general, migration is an assertive mechanism, filtering and sifting the population as its members undergo socio-economic mobility. The recent volatility of population redistribution trends in the U.S continues to stimulate demographic imaginations.

Counter-urbanization or regional decentralization since the late 1970s initiated the polarization reversal tendencies and the decentralization of population, commercial, and industrial activities to the suburbs, intermediate-sized cities, and small towns. In some regions the non-metropolitan territories are at the same time losing population and decaying as farmlands shrink. Is the present phase of migration and settlement a myth or reality in the State of Georgia? This research effort lays out facts of this population dynamics and changes in the state of Georgia and speculates about the nature of the process.

2. Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the recent population movement and dynamics in Georgia using the counties and their cities as units of analysis. The study is exploratory and explanatory in nature, using descriptive statistics such as totals,

ratios, averages, and tables and graphs. Personal interviews and secondary data were collected from different departments, organizations, and online sources. The degree of population increases or loss in different sizes of settlements in different counties and regions are to be established. The research strives to establish the final destination of migrants from urban as well as rural areas, therefore the concept of “equifinality”.

3. The Study Area

The Study Area is the State of Georgia with its Counties, Cities, and Towns. The State of Georgia is in the South-Eastern United States. According to the 2020 United States census, Georgia was the 8th most populous state with 10,713,771 inhabitants. It is the 21st largest by land spanning 57,513.49 square miles (148,959.3 square kilometers of land. Georgia is divided into 159 counties and contains 535 municipalities consisting of cities, towns, consolidated city-counties, and consolidated cities. The largest municipality by population is Atlanta with population of 512,550 residents, and the smallest is Aldora with 103 residents.

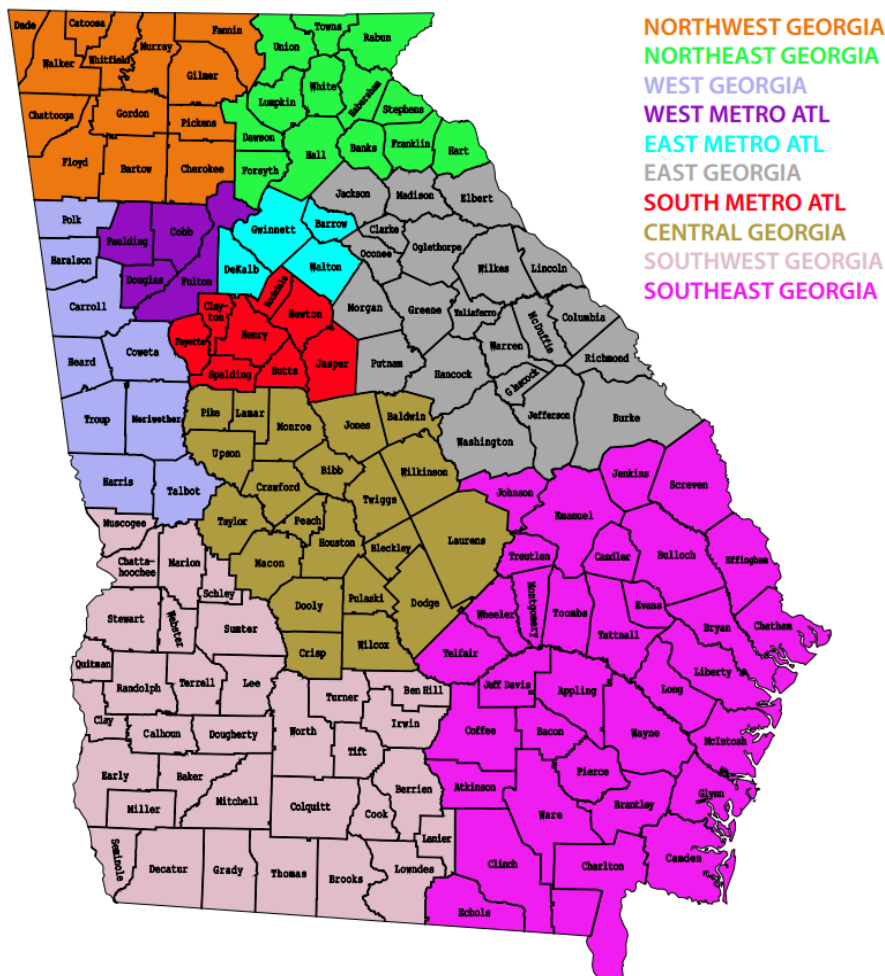


Figure 1. Map of Georgia Counties.



Figure 2. Map of Georgia Major Cities.



Figure 3. Map of Georgia with Cities, Interstate Highways, Roads, Rivers, and Lakes.

4. Theoretical Framework for the Study

The Urbanization reversal gained a greater traction in the United States in the 1970s, depicting a demographic trend where people move from urban areas to smaller towns and rural areas. The manifestation of this process as both a process and a movement is population deconcentrating, reversing the concentration associated with the traditional rural-to-urban migration.

The above phenomenon of urbanization reversal or counterurbanization, according to Mitchell and Bryant [24] is a process that has a transformation effect on a settlement system or urban region from a concentrated to a more deconcentrated state. They also implied that counterurbanization is also a movement of migrating from places of greater to lesser population concentration [5]. The movement impacts medium-sized cities, small towns, and rural areas contributing to their population growth, but at differentiated rates shown by statistics on internal migration of the recipient spaces.

From the inception of current phenomenon of counterurbanization, it has become a key line of inquiry in social science studies [2, 3, 6, 22, 24]. According to Mitchell and Bryant (2020) [24], the study is not only occurring in the U.S but extensively documented also in many other countries and regions such as Europe, North America, Israel, Australia, New Zealand, Africa (e.g., South Africa), Canada, Asia (e.g., China, Japan), and Greece.

During the late 20th century and early 21st century period of counterurbanization, the reshaping of social and economic structures was also happening in rural areas across U.S. The functional and morphological restructuring of rural areas were mostly due to interconnected factors of rural pathologies and the push factors, such as demographic aging and shrinking populations, job loss due to agricultural decline, small farm closures due to mechanization, and merger of farms and consolidations. Other pathologies include, especially the limited opportunities in certain high-wage or specialized sectors which discourage and constrain the highly skilled workers from relocating to rural areas. Some rural areas are not easily accessible from other regions due to their remoteness, making it virtually impossible to attract new businesses, industries, and young resourceful individuals.

Urbanization reversal or counterurbanization is not the monopoly of the U.S, it is also occurring in other advanced countries, many emerging economies, and some developing countries. It happens for various reasons and has significant impacts on, and implications for middle-sized and small settlement areas. For example, it is happening in United Kingdom [10]; Industrialized or Global North countries [9, 15, 19]; Developing countries [1]; Japan [14]; Asia [21]; Latin America [17]; Africa [11, 16]; and of course, U.S [5].

In the U.S like in other areas or regions of the world, there are multiple interconnected factors, forces, and drivers that are associated with counterurbanization mobilities, which include

Economic and Employment Drivers; Quality of Life and Environmental Factors; Infrastructure and Accessibility; Demographic and Lifestyle Shifts; Health and Safety Factors, and even Government Policies. The above counterurbanization taxonomy factors were further explained by Mitchell and Bryant (2020) as shown below [24]:

The Economic and Employment Drivers: The rising property prices in major cities are among the most powerful forces pushing people toward rural areas where their financial assets stretch further. For example, housing affordability for the migrants in cheaper regions, rural employment growth as corporations in small and medium-sized towns create jobs reducing the need to relocate to urban areas, and cost reduction for employers who save money by hiring in rural areas thereby cutting down the higher overhead costs associated with urban offices.

Quality of Life and Environmental Factors: People are drawn to rural areas for cleaner air, lower crime, less congestion, and access to green space, and the idealized views of country life.

The Infrastructure and Accessibility Factors: Improved transportation and connectivity have made rural living more feasible by enabling easier access to urban services and employment opportunities. The high-speed internet and digital communication tools have reduced the need for physical urban presence and making remote work viable from rural locations. Higher car ownership and road development improvements allow residents to commute or access distant services easily.

The Demographic and Lifestyle Shifts: Increased wealth and changing life stages have enabled more people to pursue rural relocation during retirement or early career transitions. Second homes and early retirement have increased movement in recent years.

The Government Policy Factor: Some governments implement investments in infrastructure, including high-speed internet and transportation links, to encourage rural development and settlement. For example, in Japan it is a deliberate effort to encourage counterurbanization to tackle rural pathologies such as aging and depopulating rural areas [14].

Other typology versions of the multiple factors associated with population dynamics and mobilities range from economic to quality-of-life motives often linked to idyllic representation of the countryside [7, 18, 20]. Thus, the concepts of “commercial counterurbanization” [8], “crisis-led counterurbanization” [26], and “lifestyle migration” [4].

Motivational data, according to Mitchell and Bryant (2020) distinguish at least four different types of counterurbanites, such as [25]:

Displaced Urbanites (also called urban dropouts or distressed movers). These counterurbanites engage in default counterurbanization and favor urban residence over rural areas. They move to either adjacent or more distant rural regions, on a permanent or temporary basis, for livelihood reasons, sometimes brought about by economic crisis.

The Exurbites. They maintain urban employment but choose rural residential living spaces to enjoy their amenities. They move their primary residences to an outer ring of the urban region to facilitate a frequent commute.

The Pro-ruralites. These retirees, new rural workers, or virtual commuters engage in mainstream counterurbanization to both metropolitan-adjacent and more distance locales. They migrate for lifestyle reasons, but often maintain urban ties through social, shopping, or virtual work activity.

The Antiurbanites (also called dystopian or neorurals). They move to escape the disamenities of urban living and to immerse themselves in an alternative lifestyle. Some engage in seasonal, or ongoing natureurbanization (a type of counterurbanization), and choose a destination adjacent to a protected natural area.

The above counterurbanite typology illustrates the diverse nature of the counterurbanite cohort, and the increasing heterogeneity of many small settlement areas. In fact, the counterurbanites impact on the functional and morphological structures of the recipient places as they can introduce new businesses to meet their demands. They can also invest their externally accumulated capital (financial, social, and/or cultural) in planned or unplanned, seasonal or year-round businesses.

This study theorizes that through internal migration in the state of Georgia, large urban centers lost population to smaller centers down the settlement hierarchy. Likewise, rural areas lost population to larger centers up the settlement hierarchy due to some rural pathologies.

The question is, what are the implications for planning and development because of the above demographic changes in large cities, middle-sized cities and small towns, as well as in rural non-metropolitan areas? This study will proffer some policies and programs for regional growth and development in Georgia.

5. Discussions

The United States population increased enormously from 1980 (226,546 million) to 2020 (323,724 million) (Table 1). Likewise, the population of State of Georgia increased enormously from 1980 (5,462,982) to 2020 (10,710,017) (Tables

2 and 3). The major cities in Georgia are Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, Savannah, Macon, Athens, Albany, and Valdosta. Some of the large cities lost population in 1980s and 1990s, such as Atlanta, Albany, Augusta, East Point, Macon, and Savannah.

Most growths are in the eight-county Metro Atlanta area, North Georgia, and Coastal Georgia (Figure 1). Metro Atlanta Counties include Fulton, DeKalb, Cobb, Gwinnett, Clayton, Douglas, Rockdale, and Henry. North Georgia Counties include Murrey, Union, White, Lumpkin, Dawson, Pickens, Cherokee, Forsyth, Hall, and Bartow. Coastal Counties include Camden, Brantly, Long, Liberty, Bryan, and Effingham. Georgia counties with large population of 50,000 or more individuals from 1990 to 2020 census years include, Bartow, Bibb, Carroll, Chatham, Cherokee, Clarke, Clayton, Cobb, Columbia, Coweta, DeKalb, Dougherty, Douglas, Fayette, Floyd, Fulton, Glynn, Gwinnett, Hall, Henry, Houston, Liberty, Lowndes, Muscogee, Richmond, Spalding, Troup, Walker, and Whitefield. (Table 4). Most of the Counties are within the orbit of Metropolitan Areas of Georgia, except Troup County.

According to Usdansky (1990) [30], *Atlanta Constitution* Staff Writer, the above three regions accounted for 72 percent of the growth across the state. Metro Atlanta more than 50 percent (56%), followed by North Georgia (11 percent), and Coastal Georgia (5 percent). The rest of the counties, especially the southern non-metropolitan/rural counties, accounted for only 28 percent during the same period. The growth of cities is mostly in the middle-sized cities of 30,000 to 80,000 inhabitants, especially from 1990 to 2020 (Tables 5 and 6). Apart from natural increase and domestic migration, growth of those middle-sized cities has been fueled by foreign born or immigrants. In 1990, the cities of 25,000 or more population with foreign born more than the Georgia state average (2.7 percent) were: Athens (5.6 percent), Atlanta (3.4 percent), Columbus (3.4 percent), East Point (3.2 percent), Marietta (5.1 percent), Roswell (6.3 percent), Smyrna (5.9 percent), and Warner Robins (3.0 percent) (Table 5). In 2020, most cities with 25,000 or more population have foreign born more or near the state average of 10.3 percent (Table 6).

Table 1. United States Population Components Change, 1980-2020.

Year	Calander Year			Rate Per 1,000 Mid-Year Population	
	Population as of January 1 (1,000)	Net Increase from Previous Year Total	Net Migration ¹ (1,000)	Net Growth Rate	Net Migration Rate
1980	226,546	1,900	724	11.1	4.2
1990	248,143	2,535	542	10.2	2.2
2000 (Projection) ²	274,110	2,492	970	9.1	3.5
2010 (Projection) ²	298,710	2,425	720	8.1	2.4

Year	Calander Year			Rate Per 1,000 Mid-Year Population	
	Population as of January 1 (1,000)	Net Increase from Previous Year Total	Net Migration ¹ (1,000)	Net Growth Rate	Net Migration Rate
2020 (Projection) ²	323,724	2,530	757	7.8	2.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau [27]. Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2000

¹ International migration and movement of armed forces

² Based on Mid-Year Series Assumptions

Table 2. Georgia Cities of 25,000 or More Population, 1980-2000.

City	Land Area 1990 (km ²)	County	Total Population 1980	Total Population 1990	Total Population 2000	% Change 1980-1990	% Change 1990-2000
Albany	143.6	Dougherty	74,059	78,804	76,939	6.4	-2.4
Athens	43.0	Clarke	42,549	86,522 ¹	100,266 ¹	103.3 ¹	15.9 ¹
Atlanta	341.3	Fulton/DeKalb	425,022	393,929	416,474	-7.3	5.7
Augusta	50.9	Richmond	47,532	44,633	195,182 ²	-6.1	337.3 ²
Columbus	560.0	Muscogee	NA ³	178,683	186,291	NA	4.3
East Point	35.6	Fulton	37,486	34,595	39,595	-7.7	14.5
LaGrange	67.2	Troup	24,163	25,574	25,998	5.8	1.7
Macon	124.0	Bibb	116,903	107,365	NA ⁴	-8.2	NA ³
Marietta	52.7	Cobb	30,829	44,129	58,748	43.1	33.1
Rome	62.7	Floyd	29,609	30,425	34,980	2.4	15.0
Roswell	84.4	Fulton	23,337	47,986	79,334	105.4	65.3
Savannah	162.1	Chatham	141,378	137,812	131,510	-2.5	-4.6
Smyrna	29.5	Cobb	20,312	32,453	40,999	59.8	26.3
Valdosta	68.6	Lowndes	37,533	40,038	43,724	6.7	9.2
Warner Robins	43.2	Houston/Peach	39,879	43,861	48,804	10.0	11.3
Georgia State	15,009.5	All Counties	5,462,982	6,478,149	8,186,453	18.6	26.4

Sources: (1) Deirdre A. Gaquin and Katherine A. DeBrandt (eds.) [12]. *2000 County and City Extra. Annual Metro, City, and County Data Book. Ninth Edition* (Lanham, MD: Bernan Press).

Table D: Cities of 25,000 or More. Land Area and Population, p. 949.

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^{2,3,4} Consolidated Government. A consolidated city-county is the "formal joining of a city (or cities) with a surrounding county government," according to the National League of Cities.

Note:

Land area in 1990 is dry land or land partially or temporarily covered by water.

Hispanic persons may be of any race.

Table 3. Georgia Cities of 25,000 or More Population, 2000-2020.

City	County	Land Area (Miles ²)	Total Population 2000	Total Population 2010	Total Population 2020	% Change 2000-2010	% Change 2010-2020	% Change 2000-2020
Albany	Dougherty	55.1	76,939	77,430	70,839	0.6	-8.5	-7.9
Alpharetta	Fulton	26.9	34,854	57,383	67,897	64.6	18.3	94.8
Athens-Clarke County	Clarke	116.3	100,266	115,370	126,391	15.1	9.6	26.1
Atlanta	Fulton/DeKalb	135.3	416,474	427,042	512,550	2.5	20.0	23.1
Augusta-Richmond County	Richmond	302.3	195,182	200,594	197,468	2.8	0.8	1.2
Columbus	Muscogee	216.5	186,291	190,570	196,442	2.3	3.1	5.5
Dalton	Whitfield	21.1	27,912	33,104	33,368	18.6	0.8	19.5
Douglasville	Douglas	22.8	20,065	29,892	34,036	49.0	13.9	69.6
Duluth	Gwinnett	10.2	22,122	26,672	29,676	20.6	11.3	34.2
Dunwoody	DeKalb	13.0	32,808	46,428	49,326	41.5	6.2	50.4
East Point	Fulton	14.7	39,595	33,452	35,042	-15.5	4.8	-11.5
Gainesville	Hall	33.4	25,578	34,045	44,213	33.1	29.9	72.9
Hinesville	Liberty	18.3	30,392	33,309	34,085	9.6	2.3	12.2
Johns Creek	Fulton	30.8	NA	76,639	85,192	NA	11.2	NA
Kennesaw	Cobb	9.7	21,675	30,618	34,712	41.3	13.4	60.2
LaGrange	Troup	42.1	25,998	29,365	30,741	13.0	4.7	18.2
Lawrenceville	Gwinnett	13.6	22,397	27,215	30,842	21.5	13.3	37.7
Macon-Bibb County	Bibb	249.4	NA	155,844	152,732	NA	-2.0	NA
Marietta	Cobb	23.4	58,748	56,369	60,786	-4.0	7.8	3.5
Milton	Fulton	38.5	NA	32,828	40,037	NA	22.0	NA
Newnan	Coweta	19.4	16,242	32,874	42,885	102.4	30.5	164.0
Peachtree City	Fayette	25.1	31,580	34,409	36,763	9.0	6.8	16.4
Rome	Floyd	31.7	34,980	36,417	36,764	4.1	1.0	5.1
Roswell	Fulton	40.7	79,334	88,333	95,434	11.3	8.0	20.3
Sandy Springs	Fulton	37.7	85,781	93,828	109,928	9.4	17.2	28.2
Savannah	Chatham	106.8	131,510	136,919	143,632	4.1	4.9	9.2
Smyrna	Cobb	15.6	40,999	50,864	56,443	24.1	11.0	37.7
Statesboro	Bulloch	15.0	22,698	28,370	33,204	25.0	17.0	46.3
Stockbridge	Henry	13.7	9,853	26,369	30,125	167.6	14.2	205.7
Valdosta	Lowndes	36.0	43,724	54,753	56,668	25.2	3.5	29.6

City	County	Land Area (Miles ²)	Total Population 2000	Total Population 2010	Total Population 2020	% Change 2000-2010	% Change 2010-2020	% Change 2000-2020
Warner Robins	Houston/Peach	37.8	48,804	69,859	76,601	43.1	9.6	57.0
Georgia State	All Counties	57,716.3	8,186,453	9,688,737	10,710,017	18.4	10.5	30.8

Source: Deirdre A. Gaquin and Mary Meghan Ryan (eds.) [13]. *2021 County and City Extra. Annual Metro, City, and County Data Book. 29th Edition.* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Bernan Press), pp. 994-995.

Table D. Cities of 25,000 or More. Land Area and Population.

Table 4. Georgia Counties* with Population of 50,000 or More Individuals, 1990-2020 Census Years.

County	1990 01/04	2000 01/04	2010 01/04	2020 01/04
Bartow	55,911	76,019	100,157	108,897
Bibb	149,967	153,887	155,547	157,347
Carroll	71,422	87,268	110,527	119,151
Chatham	216,935	232,048	265,128	295,291
Cherokee	90,204	141,903	214,346	266,594
Clarke	87,594	101,489	116,714	128,670
Clayton	182,052	236,517	259,424	299,403
Cobb	447,745	607,751	688,078	766,112
Columbia	66,031	89,288	124,053	156,013
Coweta	53,853	89,215	127,317	146,163
DeKalb	545,837	665,865	691,893	764,425
Dougherty	96,311	96,065	94,565	85,793
Douglas	71,120	92,174	132,403	144,310
Fayette	62,415	91,263	106,567	119,181
Floyd	81,251	90,565	96,317	98,582
Fulton	648,951	816,006	920,581	1,066,675
Glynn	62,496	67,568	79,626	84,500
Gwinnett	352,910	588,448	805,321	957,306
Hall	95,428	139,277	179,684	202,889
Henry	58,741	119,341	203,922	240,703
Houston	89,208	110,765	139,900	163,642
Liberty	52,745	61,610	63,453	65,271
Lowndes	75,981	92,115	109,233	118,247
Muscogee	179,278	186,291	189,885	206,919
Richmond	189,719	199,775	200,549	206,603
Spalding	54,457	58,417	64,073	67,312
Troup	55,536	58,779	67,044	69,426
Walker	58,340	61,053	68,756	67,653

County	1990 01/04	2000 01/04	2010 01/04	2020 01/04
Whitfield	72,462	83,525	102,299	102,867
Georgia State	6,478,216	8,186,453	9,687,653	10,713,771

Source: Georgia (USA): Places in Counties—Population Statistics, Charts, and Map, Pp. 1-22.

Retrieved 01/30/2026. <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/usa/places/georgia/>

*All are Metropolitan Counties except Troup County

Table 5. Georgia Cities of 25,000 or More Population Characteristics by Race (Percent) in 1990.

City	Total Population 1990	Percent White	Percent Black	Percent Hispanic	Percent Indian, Eskimo, Aleut	Percent Asian and Pacific Islander	Percent Other	Percent Foreign Born
Albany	78,804	44.2	55.0	0.8	0.2	0.4	0.2	1.0
Athens	86,522	66.4	29.6	1.6	0.1	3.3	0.5	5.6
Atlanta	393,929	31.0	67.1	1.9	0.1	0.9	0.9	3.4
Augusta	44,633	43.0	56.0	0.8	0.2	0.6	0.2	1.7
Columbus	178,683	59.0	38.0	2.9	0.3	1.4	1.4	3.4
East Point	34,595	31.6	66.3	1.9	0.2	0.7	1.1	3.2
La Grange	25,574	56.7	42.3	0.6	0.1	0.8	0.1	1.6
Macon	107,365	47.1	52.2	0.6	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.8
Marietta	44,129	76	20.5	3.2	0.3	1.8	1.1	5.1
Rome	30,425	68.8	29.7	1.7	0.2	0.7	0.6	1.8
Roswell	47,986	92.2	4.9	2.7	0.1	1.8	1.1	6.3
Savannah	137,812	46.8	51.3	1.4	0.2	1.1	0.5	1.9
Smyrna	32,453	80.2	15.9	3.5	0.3	2.3	1.4	5.9
Valdosta	40,038	55.2	43.5	1.1	0.2	0.9	0.2	1.8
Warner Robins	43,861	72.7	25.0	1.8	0.3	1.4	0.6	3.0
Georgia State	6,478,149	71.0	27.0	1.7	0.2	1.2	0.7	2.7

Sources: (1) Deirdre A. Gaquin and Katherine A. DeBrandt (eds.) [12]. *2000 County and City Extra. Annual Metro, City, and County Data Book. Ninth Edition* (Lanham, MD: Bernan Press).

Table D: Cities of 25,000 or More. Land Area and Population, p. 949.

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Note:

Land area in 1990 is dry land or land partially or temporarily covered by water.

Hispanic persons may be of any race.

Table 6. Georgia Cities of 25,000 or More Population Characteristics by Race (Percent) in 2020.

City	Total Population 2020	Percent White	Percent Black or African American	Percent Hispanic or Latino	Percent American Indian, Alaskan Native	Percent Asian ¹	Percent Other	Percent Foreign Born
Albany	70,839	D	D	2.4	D	D	0.0	2.0
Alpharetta	67,897	60.4	14.4	10.9	0.0	20.6	0.8	24.4
Athens-Clark County	126,391	63.1	28.0	11.0	0.0	4.3	1.4	10.2
Atlanta	512,550	42.3	49.1	4.9	0.2	5.3	0.9	8.4
Augusta-Richmond County	197,468	34.7	57.5	4.8	0.1	1.8	2.6	4.0
Columbus	196,442	42.6	46.7	7.7	0.5	2.9	3.4	6.3
Dalton	33,368	82.6	3.8	42.9	0.7	3.2	4.9	24.2
Douglasville	34,036	D	D	8.9	D	D	D	9.8
Duluth	29,676	44.3	20.4	6.7	0.0	29.7	1.6	34.5
Dunwoody	49,326	62.3	12.0	9.6	0.6	20.8	3.0	20.6
East Point	35,042	14.4	81.2	4.1	0.8	0.3	1.7	4.9
Gainesville	44,213	77.3	10.3	48.0	0.1	3.7	3.5	20.5
Hinesville	34,085	42.8	42.2	15.7	0.3	2.4	3.5	8.4
Johns Creek	85,192	61.0	11.9	8.4	0.1	21.7	3.0	27.1
Kennesaw	34,712	51.5	32.2	5.5	0.0	7.8	5.0	17.3
LaGrange	30,741	D	D	4.3	D	D	D	3.5
Lawrenceville	30,842	38.4	43.6	24.2	0.0	4.7	9.7	24.9
Macon-Bibb County	152,737	39.3	54.4	3.5	0.0	2.2	1.4	3.6
Marietta	60,786	45.4	31.4	18.2	1.7	3.0	15.0	15.0
Milton	40,037	D	D	4.5	D	D	D	15.3
Newman	42,885	D	D	7.1	D	D	D	10.4
Peachtree City	36,763	75.5	11.0	3.2	0.0	7.8	0.1	14.6
Rome	36,764	58.2	25.1	17.9	0.0	1.1	7.2	10.6
Roswell	95,434	72.0	15.0	14.3	0.4	5.7	3.7	19.3
Sandy Springs	109,928	63.6	22.4	10.3	0.0	7.9	3.8	17.7
Savannah	143,632	40.5	52.6	5.4	0.4	3.1	2.0	5.2
Smyrna	56,443	46.9	28.2	19.9	1.4	8.0	13.9	20.4
Statesboro	33,204	47.6	41.5	5.6	0.2	1.9	2.8	4.1
Stockbridge	30,125	D	D	11.8	D	D	D	9.5
Valdosta	56,668	36.4	57.3	6.0	1.3	0.7	0.0	2.6
Warner Robins	76,601	48.7	39.7	5.5	0.1	7.2	0	9.4
Georgia State	10,710,017	57.8	31.9	9.8	0.4	4.1	3.0	10.3

Source: Deirdre A.Q. Gaquin and Mary Meghan Ryan (eds) [13]. 2021 County and City Extra. Annual Metro, City, and County Data Book, 29th Edition.

Table D. Cities of 25,000 or More. Land Area and Population. (Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Bernan Press), Pp. 994-995.

¹Hawaiian Pacific Islander Population Percentage in 2020 was very Insignificant except in Peachtree City (1.8%) and Valdosta (0.7). See page 994.

6. Findings

The degree or tempo by which a settlement or central place lost population by 2020 depends on the size and location within metropolitan or nonmetropolitan areas. Fewer cities between 10,000 and 25,000 inhabitants lost population in 2020 census year. They are within the orbit of large cities (Table 7). Cities of 5,000 and 10,000 inhabitants lost more residents than the previous size levels but less than the next lower level of between 2,000 and 5,000 inhabitants. These cities are farther removed from large cities than the previous cities (Table 8). Cities of 2,000 and 5,000 inhabitants lost more residents than the previous higher levels but less than the next lower level of 1,000 to 2,000 inhabitants. These are closer to smaller rural towns. (Table 9). Cities of 1,000 to 2,000 inhabitants lost more residents than the previous higher-level settlements but less than the next lower-level inhabitants of less than 1,000. These cities are closest to the rural towns. (Table 10). Cities and towns of less than 1,000 inhabitants lost more residents than the previous higher levels. These cities are rural towns. It has the highest number of settlements that lost population in 2020 (Table 11). Out of 241 towns that had less than 1,000 inhabitants in 2020 census, 144 of them lost inhabitants.

The larger the cities or settlements the less inhabitants they lost in 2020. As the towns or settlements were getting smaller, the more they lost population in 2020. The worst cities and towns that lost population from 2010 to 2020 were less than

1,000 inhabitants. Most of the smallest settlements that lost enormous residents are in Georgia's nonmetropolitan areas or agricultural areas and districts. Out of 241 towns that were less than 1,000 inhabitants in 2020 census, 144 of them (about 60 percent) lost population, from Fort Gaines (Clayton County) to Aldora (Lamar County).

The U.S population increased enormously from 1980 to 2020 with modest net migration rates.

The net growth rates had been high though dwindled from 11.1 percent in 1980, down to 7.8 percent in 2020 (Table 1). In absolute terms, the net increase from previous years had been high. Likewise, State of Georgia population increased enormously from 1980 through 2020, with rapid rate of change (30.8 percent) from 2000 to 2020. The percent of foreign born of 10.3 in 2020 was high when compared to only 2.7 percent in 1990. State of Georgia saw a significant increase of Blacks or African Americans, Hispanics or Latinos, and Asian Americans, from 1990 to 2020. The White percent decreased enormously during the same period.

The cities and towns populations in their categories increased during the study decades, except those that lost inhabitants. Going up the central place or settlement hierarchy from the lowest to middle, and to the highest, a smaller number of settlements lost population while a majority gained population. Most middle-level settlements gained population as they are in the umbra (immediate core) and penumbra (distant core) of the largest settlements that grew modestly.

Table 7. Georgia Cities of 10,000 to 25,000 that Lost Population in 2020.

City	County	Population 01/04/1990	Population 01/04/2000	Population 01/04/2010	Population 01/04/2020
College Park	Fulton/Clayton	21,962	20,799	14,607	13,894
Griffin	Spalding	21,837	22,919	23,643	23,478
Milledgeville	Baldwin	17,894	19,215	18,223	17,061
Cusseta-Chattahoochee County (Unified Govt.)	Chattahoochee	16,934	14,895	11,263	9,569
Americus	Sumter	16,600	17,043	17,112	16,227
Dublin	Laurens	16,411	15,943	16,172	16,074
Brunswick	Glynn	16,533	15,598	15,296	15,216
Riverdale	Clayton	11,156	13,014	15,134	15,129
Cordele	Crisp	11,149	11,530	11,170	10,241
Georgia State	All	6,478,216	8,186,453	9,687,653	10,713,771

Sources: (1) U.S. Census Bureau [28]. *2020 Census Count by Georgia City Population*. Data released by the U.S. Census Bureau, August 12, 2021. Compiled by the Legislative and Congressional Reapportionment Office.

(2) U.S. Census Bureau. *Georgia (USA) [29]: Places in Counties—Population Statistics, Charts, and Maps*. Counties: Population of all counties in Georgia by Census Years <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/usa/places/georgia>.

Explanation: Latest available rebased population figures used. In case of significant changes, they were recalculated by using census block data.

Table 8. Georgia Cities of 5,000 to 10,000 that Lost Population in 2020.

City	County	Population 01/04/1990	Population 01/04/2000	Population 01/04/2010	Population 01/04/2020
Jesup	Wayne	9,151	9,307	10,209	9,817
Fitzgerald	Ben Hill/Irwin	9,077	9,049	9,160	9,015
Fort Valley	Peach	9,377	8,149	9,805	8,788
Lafayette	Walker	6,892	6,608	7,131	6,894
Eatonton	Putman	6,303	6,775	6,480	6,307
Barnesville	Lamar	5,258	5,995	6,827	6,123
Sandersville	Washington	6,603	6,321	5,930	5,812
Sylvester	Worth	5,982	6,154	6,189	5,629
Camilla	Mitchell	5,164	5,394	5,308	5,190
Elberton	Elbert	5,506	4,660	4,653	4,640
Summerville	Chattooga	5,014	4,631	4,532	4,422
Dawson	Terrell	5,353	5,145	4,619	4,393
Georgia State	All	6,478,216	8,186,453	9,687,653	10,713,771

Sources: (1) U.S. Census Bureau [28]2020 Census Count by Georgia City Population. Data released by the U.S. Census Bureau, August 12, 2021. Compiled by the Legislative and Congressional Reapportionment Office.

(2) U.S. Census Bureau. *Georgia (USA) [29]: Places in Counties—Population Statistics, Charts, and Maps*. Counties: Population of all counties in Georgia by Census Years <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/usa/places/georgia>.

Explanation: Latest available rebased population figures used. In case of significant changes, they were recalculated by using census block data.

Table 9. Georgia Cities of 2,000 to 5,000 that Lost Population in 2020.

City	County	Population 1990	Population 2000	Population 2010	Population 2020
Cochran	Bleckley	4,585	4,418	5,153	5,052
Lyons	Toombs	4,512	4,174	4,341	4,240
Jonesboro	Clayton	3,910	4,324	4,729	4,235
Hazlehurst	Jeff Davis	4,469	3,671	4,152	4,083
Metter	Candler	3,709	3,871	4,074	4,004
Hawkinsville	Pulaski	3,746	4,340	4,589	3,980
Rossville	Walker	3,657	3,546	4,098	3,976
Hephzibah	Richmond	3,202	3,850	4,037	3,827
Washington	Wilkes	4,364	4,300	4,135	3,750
Walthourville	Liberty	2,426	4,041	4,189	3,688
Manchester	Meriwether/Tabot	4,120	4,196	4,249	3,604
Pelham	Mitchell	3,900	4,130	3,890	3,503
Alma	Bacon	3,666	3,339	3,478	3,435
Cuthbert	Randolph	3,756	3,760	3,870	3,127

City	County	Population 1990	Population 2000	Population 2010	Population 2020
Montezuma	Macon	4,497	4,070	3,499	3,058
Millen	Jenkins	3,829	3,525	3,116	2,966
Vienna	Dooly	2,730	3,040	4,008	2,940
Chickamauga	Walker	2,519	2,402	3,215	2,921
Soperton	Treutlen	2,810	2,865	3,110	2,885
Lakeland	Lanier	2,476	2,733	3,374	2,880
Sylvania	Screven	3,107	2,913	2,956	2,636
Claxton	Evans	2,508	2,324	2,746	2,606
Monticello	Jasper	2,396	2,539	2,686	2,541
Reidsville	Tattall	2,491	2,251	2,624	2,516
Louisville	Jefferson	2,513	2,706	2,492	2,384
Webster County Unified Govt.	Webster/Marion	2,258	2,390	2,799	2,349
Homerville	Clinch	2,697	2,901	2,464	2,337
Georgetown-Quitman County	Quitman	2,209	2,596	2,510	2,234
Trenton	Dade	2,045	1,955	2,299	2,187
Gordon	Wilkinson	2,466	2,153	2,018	1,782
Warrenton	Warren	2,217	2,098	1,934	1,745
Wadley	Jefferson	2,437	2,105	2,049	1,644
Georgia State	All	6,478,216	8,186,453	9,687,653	10,713,771

Sources: (1) U.S. Census Bureau [28]. *2020 Census Count by Georgia City Population*. Data released by the U.S. Census Bureau, August 12, 2021. Compiled by the Legislative and Congressional Reapportionment Office.

(2) U.S. Census Bureau. *Georgia (USA) [29]: Places in Counties—Population Statistics, Charts, and Maps*. Counties: Population of all counties in Georgia by Census Years <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/usa/places/georgia>.

Explanation: Latest available rebased population figures used. In case of significant changes, they were recalculated by using census block data.

Table 10. Georgia Cities and Towns of 1,000 to 2,000 that Lost Population in 2020.

City/Town	County	Population 1990	Population 2000	Population 2010	Population 2020
Mount Vernon	Montgomery	1,925	2,080	2,361	1,978
Butler	Taylor	1,675	1,919	2,025	1,873
Pearson	Atkinson	1,714	1,820	2,109	1,822
Twin City	Emanuel	1,464	1,734	1,747	1,650
Union Point	Greene	1,774	1,648	1,625	1,603
Ellaville	Schley	1,726	1,633	1,819	1,592
Ludowici	Long	1,291	1,439	1,707	1,590
Buena Vista	Marion	1,474	1,649	2,184	1,588

City/Town	County	Population 1990	Population 2000	Population 2010	Population 2020
Lincolnton	Lincoln	1,493	1,674	1,551	1,482
Tennille	Washington	1,631	1,587	1,532	1,501
Darien	McIntosh	1,939	2,008	1,834	1,457
Emerson	Bartow	1,383	1,368	1,465	1,444
Richland	Stewart	1,694	1,819	1,471	1,361
Sparta	Hancock	1,678	1,542	1,394	1,356
Blue Ridge	Fannin	1,678	1,542	1,394	1,356
Willacoochee	Atkinson	1,230	1,461	1,391	1,238
Edison	Calhoun	1,182	1,372	1,540	1,225
Pine Mountain	Harris/Meriwether	1,041	1,137	1,299	1,217
Lumpkin	Stewart	1,386	1,301	1,128	888
Arlington	Calhoun/Early	1,513	1,592	1,476	1,211
Boston	Thomas	1,393	1,421	1,315	1,210
Cave Spring	Floyd	1,013	970	1,200	1,183
Rochelle	Wilcox	1,510	1,453	1,175	1,163
Woodbine	Camden	1,236	1,231	1,403	1,063
Woodbury	Meriwether	1,405	1,268	966	907
Broxton	Coffee	1,219	1,388	1,189	1,049
Marshallville	Macon	1,487	1,352	1,445	1,045
Reynolds	Taylor	1,188	1,054	1,073	925
Nahunta	Brantley	1,019	1,126	1,039	1,012
Lumber City	Telfair	1,429	1,245	1,323	969
Greenville	Meriwether	1,294	1,052	880	797
Meigs	Thomas/Mitchell	1,148	1,115	1,035	928
Fort Gaines	Clay	1,248	1,108	1,112	998
Oglethorpe	Macon	1,311	1,199	1,332	1,000
Sardis	Burke	1,123	1,080	999	996
Jeffersonville	Twiggs	1,547	1,208	1,029	976
Buchanan	Haralson	1,011	982	1,115	931
Doerun	Colquitt	1,056	839	774	739
Shellman	Randolph	1,165	1,167	1,083	854
Georgia State	All	6,478,216	8,186,453	9,687,653	10,713,771

Sources: (1) U.S. Census Bureau [28]. *2020 Census Count by Georgia City Population*. Data released by the U.S. Census Bureau, August 12, 2021. Compiled by the Legislative and Congressional Reapportionment Office.

(2) U.S. Census Bureau. *Georgia (USA): [29] Places in Counties—Population Statistics, Charts, and Maps*. Counties: Population of all counties in Georgia by Census Years <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/usa/places/georgia>.

Explanation: Latest available rebased population figures used. In case of significant changes, they were recalculated by using census block data.

Table 11. Georgia Cities and Towns (Rural Towns) of Less than 1,000 Population that Lost 70 or More People, 2010-2020.

City	County	Population 2010	Population 2020	Population Change 2010-2020
Lumpkin	Stewart	2,741	891	-1,850
Chester	Dodge	1,596	525	-1,071
Lumber City	Telfair	1,328	967	-361
Oglethorpe	Macon	1,328	995	-333
Talbotton	Talbot	970	742	-228
Shellman	Randolph	1,083	861	-222
Plains	Sumter	776	573	-203
Alto	Bank/Habersham	1,172	970	-202
Riceboro	Liberty	809	615	-194
Roberta	Crawford	1,007	813	-194
Scotland	Telfair/Wheeler	366	173	-193
Alapaha	Berrien	668	481	-187
Mountain City	Rabun	1,088	904	-184
Buchanan	Haralson	1,104	938	-166
Canon	Franklin/Hart	804	643	-161
Renolds	Taylor	1,086	926	-160
Uvalda	Montgomery	598	439	-159
Harrison	Washington	489	337	-150
Cadwell	Laurens	528	381	-147
Pinehurst	Dooly	455	309	-146
Arabi	Crisp	586	447	-139
Ray City	Berrien/Lanier	1,090	956	-134
Byromville	Dooly	546	422	-124
Lenox	Cook	873	752	-121
Adrian	Johnson/Emanuel	664	552	-112
Meigs	Thomas/Mitchell	1,035	928	-107
Aldora	Lamar	103	0	-103
Woodland	Talbot	408	305	-103
Bartow	Jefferson	286	186	-100
North High Shoals	Oconee	652	552	-100
Rhine	Dodge	394	295	-99
Luthersville	Meriwether	874	776	-98
Waverly Hall	Harris	735	638	-97
Leary	Calhoun	618	524	-94
Stillmore	Emanuel	532	439	-93
Poulan	Worth	851	760	-91
Toombsboro	Wilkinson	472	383	-89

City	County	Population 2010	Population 2020	Population Change 2010-2020
Siloam	Greene	282	194	-88
Milan	Telfair/Dodge	700	613	-87
Eton	Murray	910	824	-86
Lilly	Dooly	213	129	-84
Greenville	Meriwether	876	794	-82
Kite	Johnson	235	165	-81
Danville	Twiggs/Wilkinson	238	165	-73
De Soto	Sumter	195	124	-71
Ellenton	Colquitt	281	210	-71

Sources: (1) U.S. Census Bureau (2021) [28]. *2020 Census Count by Georgia City Population*. Data released by the U.S. Census Bureau, August 12, 2021. Compiled by the Legislative and Congressional Reapportionment Office.

(2) U.S. Census Bureau. *Georgia (USA) [29]: Places in Counties—Population Statistics, Charts, and Maps*. Counties: Population of all counties in Georgia by Census Years <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/usa/places/georgia>.

Explanation: Latest available rebased population figures used. In case of significant changes, they were recalculated by using census block data.

Thus, the middle-sized settlements were growing at the expense of the larger cities that were undergoing counter-urbanization and demographic shifts. The middle-sized settlements grew faster than the largest cities during the study period, indicating that the smallest settlements (towns) must have also lost their inhabitants to the nearby larger centers. Therefore, it can be confidently concluded that the small and middle-sized settlements were the final destination of Georgia's current population movement, thus the concept of "equifinality" of the population dynamics.

7. Reasons for the Population Dynamics in Georgia Counties and Settlements

In recent years Georgia State has witnessed some of its cities decaying, most of its nonmetropolitan and farther removed rural areas deserted, while its sprawling suburbs bustling and hustling with progress and prosperity. Some large cities lost inhabitants, especially the middle- and upper-income class, in the 1980s and 1990s due to inner-city high crime and illiteracy rates, structural and environmental dilapidation, inadequate infrastructure, inadequate public services, housing crisis, declining tax base and economic base, aging population, abject poverty, high tax burden, stark inequality, and undemocratic policies, among others. Some cities such as Atlanta (Fulton County), Albany (Dougherty County), Augusta (Richmond), East Point (Fulton County), and Macon (Bibb County) witnessed population loss during the decades, and became synonymous with urban underclass, and unemployed Blacks and other minorities. Some of the large cities grew in the last two decades due to: consolidated government (Athens-Clarke) and

unified government (Augusta-Richmond), strong market and corporate headquarters, logistics, tech, entertainments and services (Atlanta), military and government jobs (Columbus), and ports services, logistics, and tourism (Savannah).

Georgia's bustling and growing middle-sized cities are largely within the orbits of large cities and the urban counties.

The growth of the Middle-sized cities since the last three decades has been the attraction of businesses and residents, college town, strong job market, manufacturing infrastructure, employment, adequate housing and living costs, economic diversity, demographic diversity, high quality of life, safety, high performing schools, central economic hub of the county, rural-suburban identity, healthcare hub, and young labor force, among others.

Exemplary cities: College town (Kennesaw, Cobb), Military (Columbus, Muscogee; Hinesville, Liberty; Warner Robins, Houston/Peach); manufacturing (Statesboro, Bulloch; LaGrange, Troup; Dalton, Whitefield; Douglasville, Douglas), rural-suburban identity (Milton, Fulton), healthcare hub (Rome, Floyd; Gainesville, Hall), demographic diversity (Lawrenceville, Gwinnett; Marietta, Cobb; Gainesville, Hall; Sandy Springs, Fulton; Duluth, Gwinnett; Kennesaw, Cobb), Technology (Roswell, Fulton; Alpharetta, Fulton), Housing (Newnan, Coweta; Peachtree City, Fayette), safety and quality of life (Peachtree City, Fayette; Newnan, Coweta), quality school (Johns Creek, Fulton; Duluth, Gwinnett), economic hub of the region/county (Dunwoody, DeKalb; Valdosta, Lowndes), and youthful population and workforce (Lawrenceville, Gwinnett; Smyrna, Cobb; Valdosta, Lowndes; Warner Robins, Houston/Peach).

Majority of Georgia's rural counties and towns lost inhabitants during the study period. They gained ghost towns and

the portrait is unequivocally troublesome. The primary drivers of small rural population decrease include collapse of agriculture and textile industries that left for abroad for cheap labor, mechanization of agriculture and consolidation of farmlands and operations that do not need many labor force. That is, small family farms gave way to large-scale automated operations. The demand for local labor undoubtedly vanished; aging demographics and the consequent “natural decrease” as large portion of residents move into retirement, younger generations relocating to larger central places/cities for employment opportunities, lack of private sector enterprises and employments, thus the lack of major new industrial “pull factor.” Other drivers include monoculture agricultural economy that lacked diversification with its devastating attrition over time; agriculture and the associated high poverty level; extreme demographic aging trend of rural communities and the associated natural decrease (deaths outnumbering births). The rural towns lack working-age population needed to attract new businesses, thus leaving the enclaves “shrinking in place” over time. Some of the farmlands are isolated from major transportation systems and corridors that struggle to attract new residents, e.g., Lumber city (Telfair County; Plains, Sumter County). A few of the rural towns experienced growth due to economic diversification that includes manufacturing, e.g., Alto (Habersham/Bank County).

7. Policy Implications for Planning and Regional Development

The primary task of this paper is to place small and middle-sized cities in the context of regional development in the State of Georgia. The paper further emphasizes the role of small and middle-sized settlements in enhancing off-farm enterprises which are crucial in establishing state commercial and industrial base. The settlements should be significant nodes for employment generation, industrialization, and the creation of backward and forward linkages between urban centers and agricultural centers in the rural areas. The relationship between small and middle-sized centers and the agricultural rural areas should be symbiotic.

Small urban centers should be the central places where agricultural commodities are collected, exchanged, and redistributed. They should be centers where farmers sell their surpluses.

On the other hand, the agricultural rural areas should provide demand for farm inputs and consumer products produced and sold in the urban centers.

To stem the out migration from rural areas, there should be appropriate government policies to diversify the economic base of the rural areas, especially establishing manufacturing industries for adequate job creation and higher incomes.

Good farming environment and enhanced remunerations as well as better treatment of farm workers should be necessary to retain farm workers from migrating to nearby urban centers

for better job opportunities.

There should be a deliberate effort to bring the wealthy and middle-class back to the city. They left the cities with their businesses and employments, making it even harder for the poor and unemployed to find a way out of their socioeconomic predicaments. The urban flight and loss of businesses led to the decline of tax base and economic base, as well as central city department stores closing due to the inability to compete with newer suburban malls. There should be deliberate government policies to reduce violent crime and vandalism in the central cities to entice those who left them to come back. Racial discrimination and segregation of minorities should be reduced, and lack of their participation in the supposedly democratic decision-making process in the central-city public policies should be enhanced.

The small and middle-sized cities orbiting the large cities should, as a matter of industrial policy, be made home to major corporations to enable people commute to work within the suburbia without clogging the central cities. Thus, the small and middle-sized cities should become living places, rather than adjuncts or subordinates to the larger cities. They should become more self-sufficient. The policy recommendation should focus on making the conditions in rural areas, suburban centers, and central cities of metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) better to encourage inhabitants from leaving in the first place, as well as even making the migrants go back to their origins.

8. Conclusions

Counter-urbanization or regional decentralization since the late 1970s in the United States initiated the polarization reversal tendencies and the decentralization of population, commercial, and industrial activities to the suburbs, intermediate-sized cities, and small towns. Is the present phase of migration and settlement a myth or reality in the State of Georgia? The study analyzed the recent population movement and dynamics in Georgia using the counties and their cities as units of analysis. The study was exploratory and explanatory in nature, using descriptive statistics such as totals, ratios, averages, and tables and graphs. The research effort established the final destination of migrants from urban as well as rural areas, therefore the concept of “equifinality.”

The study supports the counter-urbanization theorization, whereby the small and middle-sized cities in the orbits of large central cities of the metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) grow at the expense of the large cities’ population decline or stagnation or modest growth.

The findings of the study include, (i) the population of most Georgia’s largest cities behaved like a pendulum, by declining in 1980s and 1990s but had grown modestly from 2000 decade; (ii) the population of the middle-sized cities grew enormously and consistently during the study period; (iii) the population of nonmetropolitan rural towns declined enormously and con-

sistently during the study period; (iv) the new immigrant population or foreign born contributed enormously to the increased population of the middle-sized cities violating the usual stepwise population movement of first moving into the central cities and then to the suburbs after gaining financial stability and momentum; and (v) the population of Georgia also grew enormously and consistently during the study period. One can confidently conclude that the destination of the lost populations in large cities and rural towns are the small and middle-sized cities and towns, which capture most of them. The policy response includes, formulating appropriate planning policies and strategies capable of determining the viability and survival of central cities; capable of influencing the future of suburbia and exurbs; and capable of determining the survival of the de-urbanized rural counties. For example, government policies should include implementing investment in infrastructure, including high-speed internet and transportation links all over the regions (both urban and rural) to encourage rural industrialization, development, and settlement. This policy should be seen as a deliberate effort to encourage counterurbanization to tackle rural pathologies, especially rural decay and shrinkage.

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Abbreviations

MSA Metropolitan Statistical Area

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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