

A B S T R A C T

Population studies in developing countries tend to focus on the interlinked phenomena of rapid growth and urbanization. This study considers a less evident but equally important trend: the redistribution of population, and consequent depopulation, in rural areas. The research is in the form of a case study of changes occurring in the population distribution in the parish of St. Ann, Jamaica, between 1960 and 1970.

The study was made possible by the availability of census data for these years tabulated at the enumeration district level. In previous censuses, data was published for much larger regions, from which only a generalized view of population movements could be traced. Data from the 1960 and 1970 censuses, together with related data from several other sources, is therefore used to describe and explain the patterns and flows within the parish.

Two approaches are used in the analysis. Changes in the distribution of population are first related to economic developments in the parish during the intercensal period, with particular reference to the growth of the bauxite and tourist industries. Secondly, a number of variables are compared, from which it emerges that population 'pressure' and the degree of employment concentration in agriculture are significant determinants of the level of out-migration from an area. A simple 'push-pull' model of the dynamics of rural population redistribution is proposed.

To provide a predictive dimension, the 'space preferences' of potential migrants were ascertained by a questionnaire survey of school-leavers. The responses indicate that the trends identified will probably continue in the future, perhaps with increased intensity.

The intra-parochial migrant stream is more selective of females than of males, but with regard to other characteristics it is difficult to distinguish migrant and non-mover.

Both migrant and potential migrant are motivated by family matters and living conditions, rather than with employment or economic opportunities, when faced with the decision to migrate. This differentiates them clearly from the long-distance migrant.

The pattern of rural depopulation may be inevitable and irreversible as is suggested by the theoreticians. Planners should be alert to the trends, however, and consider their significance to future development strategies.