

Abstract: COVID-19 has had significant impacts on social and economic sectors worldwide. International travel and tourism are restricted as preventive measures to combat the disease. However, it is clearly visible that the mobility from urban to rural areas continues within the borders of the countries during the pandemic. Mobility to the countryside is named as lifestyle mobility. It varies significantly in motivations, frequency, push and pull factors, and duration of stay. It is also considered an essential agent of change that causes gentrification in rural vicinities regarding economic structure, real estate market, and sociocultural life. The recent spread of COVID-19 has also been deemed a vital push for urban-rural mobility. The present study is aimed to explore the gentrification of lifestyle mobilities in the Yaylas of the Taurus Mountains during the pandemic. A mixed-method approach using questionnaire and interview techniques was applied. Results revealed that the duration and frequency of seasonal mobility towards second homes in Turkey have changed with the spread of COVID-19. Moreover, it is found that the selected mountain areas confront the impacts of urbanization, increase in housing prices, and commercial occupation of land. The research concludes that such changes are augmented due to the increased mobility of urbanites belonging to the new middle class of Mersin and Adana metropolitan cities to rural areas to escape COVID-19. Due to the increase in lifestyle mobility, gentrification takes place in rural and mountainous areas, and accordingly, rural residents tend to move to the city.

Keywords: lifestyle mobility, rural gentrification, Alpine gentrification, COVID-19, mountainous areas, Turkey

Highlights

- Rising mobility to rural and mountain regions caused by COVID-19 restrictions.
- Original rural inhabitants sold properties to high prices and try to settle in the lowland cities.
- The short-term effect on the rural economy was positive.
- Rural areas function as insurance for the whole society against rare or yet unknown risks.
- The crisis makes new trends even more visible.
- Turkish conditions concern legal and administrative gaps, the weakness of local governments and the uncontrolled implementation of Free market policies.

1. Lifestyle mobility: Rural-to-urban and urban-to-rural migration – the two coins of urbanization of mountain areas

Out-migration, i.e., rural-to-urban migration, has long been the dominant discourse in mountain research. It is now well established that global urbanization has also affected mountain areas (Haller and Branca, 2022; Perlik, 2011, 2019; Wang et al. 2019). This occurs either through functional incorporation of mountain areas into metropolitan regions on the mountain fringe (e.g., through commuting to work), through the activity of international mining corporations (Forget, 2015; Romero et al., 2012), or through globally oriented holiday resorts in the high altitudes of the mountains (Nairan and Singh, 2019; Nepal and Jamal, 2011). But also in the form of urban-to-rural mobility by leisure commuting to second homes (Arnesen et al., 2011). Often these mobilities are subsumed under the label of *amenity migration* (Glorioso and Moss, 2012; Otero and Rodrigo González, 2011; Steinicke et al., 2012 and many others) and cover a broad spectrum of social practices. Aesthetic and ecological motives are often cited as the main reason, based on surveys, and taken as granted. It is often assumed that these areas gain purchasing power and cultural life. Less attention is paid to the volatility of these processes, the temporariness of lifestyle cycles and the displacing impacts on the existing economic structure and settlements.

This article was written as part of a dissertation project⁵, in which the question of the character of the use of summer resorts (yaylas) by urban populations in the Taurus Mountains was to be clarified. Because of a large spectrum of social practices in question, the term lifestyle mobility (Cohen et al., 2015) is used here; it initially leaves open how intensively the yaylas are used. Because these processes are the activities of urban middle classes that penetrate into previously rural areas, the term gentrification is used, which has been described for rural areas (Phillips, 1993) and for mountain areas (Perlik, 2011). This, and the theoretical assumptions are discussed in more detail in section 2. The research project fell into the phase of the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore took place under difficult conditions. This disadvantage, however, turned out to be an advantage, since the given conditions provided an ad hoc finding of the actors' practices in an unexpected crisis situation quasi in real time. COVID-19 is one of the key figures of a set of the current multiple crises that may reconfigure spatial relationships profoundly at global level. The extreme situation opened up new questions and proved to be a potential accelerator of processes that would otherwise have become less clearly visible.

This article thus focuses on the findings under the conditions of the pandemic and possible long-term consequences. The project started with three research questions:

- 1) Do the summer resorts of the yaylas prove the stabilizing tendencies of a new urban-rural migration to mountains, according to the advocates of amenity migration (especially Moss, 2006; Steinicke et al., 2012), or is it rather a case of conversion through gentrification, accompanied by an exodus of the autochthonous population?
- 2) To what extent do the yaylas contribute to a selective, highly specialized development of mountain areas at the expense of traditional users (Kirmizi, 2022; Narain and Singh, 2019; Naitthani and Kainthola, 2015; Perlik 2011, 2019; Rao et al., 2000; SRF, 2022)?
- 3) Which social classes use the yaylas and how do they interact with the local population? And, as an ad hoc question in the COVID-19 situation:
- 4) How does lifestyle mobility change during the pandemic? How does it affect the real estate market under the aspects of gentrification and future trends of lifestyle mobility? What are the COVID-19-specific impacts?

Under growth conditions, metropolitan regions have developed significant agglomeration advantages. In times of multiple crises, these advantages can quickly turn into agglomeration disadvantages. Further questions therefore are: Can such a change already be observed during the COVID-19 pandemic and how does it manifest itself? Can the immediate effects be used to draw conclusions about medium-term changes in spatial and regional development? Could this lead to a reversal of the ongoing loss of importance of the peripheral rural and mountain regions?

Corona can be seen as an accelerator and as a clarifier of spatial development processes. Under the given very limiting research conditions, this fourth question became central and forms the core of this article.

This research article is organized as follows: After the introduction, section 2 introduces the current debate on urban-to-rural migration and organises it according to theoretical regional economic and sociological approaches. Basic terms are defined or explained. Section 3 situates the case study areas of Çamlıyayla and Meydan, located in the Taurus mountains in the hinterlands of the Turkish metropolises Adana and Mersin. Section 4 describes the research methodology and data used, section 5 presents the results with a discussion in section 6. Finally, there is a conclusion (7).

2. State of the art on urban-to-rural mobilities and theoretical basis

Since the 1990s, "urban-to-rural migration" has, again, been increasingly used to describe a counter-trend to rural decline by outmigration. Edward Ullman, a leading figure of the urban sociology Chicago School

⁵ In Turkish "COVID-19 Sırasında Yaşam Tarzı Hareketliliğinin Kırsal ve Alp Soylulaştırmasına Etkisi: Türkiye'de Toros Dağlarında Yayla Deneyimi"

In English "Rural and Alpine Gentrification Impact of Lifestyle Mobilities during COVID-19: The Yayla Experience at the Taurus Mountains in Turkey"

(and therefore a representative of the seemingly inevitable urban concentration), recognized the opposite tendency early on (Ullman, 1954). In the 1960s and 1970s, an urban-to-rural movement, which became known as *neo-ruraux* (neo-rural), spread in Europe (CHS, 2016). It was Laurence Moss who coined the term "amenity migration" from the 1990s onwards, arguing that a general change had led to a reassessment of ecological and cultural values, which had initiated a trend towards urbanites migrating to mountain areas, even if the earning opportunities there were poorer. As evidence were shown the migration rates towards the US-states in the Rocky Mountains, but also migration to mountain areas in the countries of the Global South (Moss, 2006). A weakness of this pioneering work was the lack of theoretical underpinning and, initially, a focus on large-area countries in which a change of residence to the mountains usually also involved a change of job because the distances did not allow for commuting, and completely location-independent working was not yet possible. Moreover, no distinction was made between permanent migration and seasonal residence. As a result, numerous works have been produced under the label "amenity migration", whereby the original concept has been watered down, because in many cases it is not clear whether it is the principal residence or a second home and whether the moves described are permanent or only temporary (examples of amenity migration in the global South, among many others: Glorioso, 2006; Janoschka and Haas, 2014; Marchant and Rojas, 2015; Otero and Rodrigo González, 2011).

In Europe, on the other hand, the practice of *leisure commuting* within a radius of 150-200km around a metropolis has become established. Case studies are the Scandinavian countries (Arnesen, et al. 2011; Williams and Kaltenborn, 1999), but also the Czech Republic (Bartoš et al., 2009). In the German-speaking world, mobility between (changing) residences, places of work, and of family meeting has been conceptualised as multilocality. This concept was originally based on economic considerations of rational choice of location. It is seen as a third option instead of work-related relocation or commuting (Weichhart, 2015). In addition, short-term changes in living situations, new family constellations and special occupational profiles (e.g., flying personnel, workers on oil platforms or in mining) are decisive (Hilti, 2009; Schier, 2020).

The originally urbanist concept of gentrification i.e., the displacement of poorer population strata by wealthy classes (gentry), was applied by Martin Phillips on peripheral areas *rural gentrification*, in order to work out commonalities and differences in social segregation (Phillips, 1993). In elaborating the concept, he highlights four alternative strands of argument: "(i) the uneven circulation of capital [capital power of richer households], (ii) a strategy to reduce reproductive labour [e.g., dependence on a particular, usually central, location to avoid commuting], (iii) a strategy to buy into particular lifestyles [positional goods, reputation], (iv) a contradictory and complex jumble of contextually specific processes [context-dependent, non-theory-driven causes]". The emphasis of Phillips' empirics in the early work is on the social analysis of gentrifiers in the rural regions of Wales. Independently, the term Alpine gentrification (Perlik, 2011) was created as a distinction from amenity migration, which turned out to be not applicable to Europe's mountains of the years 2000 (it was the heydays of the renaissance of cities after decades of decline). In addition, the motivational statements of interviewed second home owners in various studies were unconvincing when the 'love of nature and landscape' was mentioned again and again. *Alpine gentrification* relies on political economy and Bourdieu's forms of capital in highlighting uneven territorial development, especially between lowland metropolitan areas and mountain villages (Perlik, 2019; Smith, 1984). It introduces the vertical component as an element of distinction in the run for gaining symbolic capital and in the regional efforts to create and exploit new territorial resources. Although not congruent, we summarise both terms here under the term *Rural and Alpine Gentrification* (RAG). An initial clarification at the beginning of the study showed that the concept of amenity migration with a permanent change of residence under abandonment of previous employment relationships does not correspond to the conditions in the Taurus Mountains but is rather comparable to the situation in the European Alps. The practice of seasonal change between valley settlement and summer residence (yayla) corresponds to the traditions of the transhumant economic forms of pastoral societies, practised by members of the new middle classes in the cities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only massively influenced the fieldwork for this study, but also the territorial relations between densely populated centres and sparsely populated peripheries. In

retrospect, together with the drastic increase in global warming and the Russian war of aggression in Europe, it represents a syndrome of multiple crises, with effects becoming clear only slowly and cannot be foreseen for the future. Thus, for the most part, up to now there are only individual observations. During the crisis many countries have implemented strict restraints such as keeping social distance, travel bans, and complete closure of social areas. Urban social practices, we name it here shortened as “urban lifestyle” can hardly be lived by such lockdowns caging people's physical mobility and freezing cultural and service activities. Many urban residents have preferred to move towards rural and mountain surroundings taking advantage of the opportunity to work remotely (Gallent, 2020; Seraphin and Dosquet, 2020). In France, second homes served in the lock-down phase of the pandemic as a targeted relief for the metropolises, especially for Paris, which was massively disturbed by the lock-down. The government's attitude of ordering the measure at short notice during the second lock-down and at the same time saying that violations would not be punished immediately was interpreted by the population as an invitation to move the home office to the second home in the countryside, which was used to good effect. Demands for second homes in the Alps have risen massively, while at the same time the school enrolments in French big cities have fallen. These practices may be generalized as there exist examples from many countries, also from Turkey (Zoğal et al., 2020; Christidis, Ciuffo and Vespe, 2021). Zoğal et al. present examples that these new demands have significantly affected the real estate market in the peripheries of large cities. However, the information on this subject is not yet sufficient. While sudden demand for stays in rural areas has risen the prices of houses and land (Costello, 2007), the influence on the number of residents is not determined yet.

Concerning the theoretical basis of the article: We assume a progressive urbanisation of society. Urbanisation is not necessarily synonymous with densification but refers to the inclusion of more and more territories in commodified relationships, i.e., in supraregional value chains and market relations. It results in a differentiation of society and of economic sectors as well as in the emergence of large-scale labour markets. Under these conditions, the core areas of metropolitan regions are at an advantage because they offer agglomeration advantages to the the population and the companies located here, i.e., economies of scale, which relate not only to the consumption offer, but above all to high standing services and social face-to-face contacts. This is why rural areas under pure market conditions are less successful and why rural-to-urban migration tends to prevail. During the urbanization process rural and mountainous areas receive specific functions for urban driven societies as leisure and dwelling areas and by this they become functionally integrated into metropolitan regions. This may be valid even if they are only sparsely populated and although they are still referred to as rural in common parlance. However, this dominating position of metropolitan areas applies as long as no agglomeration disadvantages occur, e.g., through social insecurity or violence. And: If the city stands still, as was the case in the Corona-lock down, the advantages turn very quickly into serious disadvantages – the city becomes too expensive for a large part of the population benefiting before from the social networks. Accordingly, there is the historic evidence that cities grow disproportionally in periods of growth, while in times of crisis rural regions lose less, remain stable or even grow (for Switzerland: Schuler, Perlik and Pasche, 2004). This general mechanism experiences a corrective in the form of governance, i.e., that of the institutional regimes that regulate the social framework and territorial relations. Such a corrective was effective in the second half of the 20th century, becoming known in literature as “Fordism”. Since the 1980s, this balancing development has been abandoned step by step, a development popularized as “neoliberal”.

In the COVID-19 crisis, the peripheries proved their importance as places of retreat to protect the population. On various occasions, a foreseeable revaluation of peripheral and rural areas has already been deduced from this new recognized advantage. Membretti et al. (2022) see the current situation of multiple crises as an opportunity to rebalance the strong imbalance to the disadvantage of peripheral areas. In terms of changing global value chains, business leaders assume that some of the sub-sectors of production will be brought back to Europe in order to make supply chains more secure, in a departure from earlier strategies that prioritized low costs above all⁶. By analogy, it can be concluded that

⁶ (e.g., the statement given to Swiss Broadcasting SRF (18 January 2023) by the CEO of the transnational company Siemens, Mr. Roland Busch, at the WEF 2023 conference at Davos. URL: <https://www.srf.ch/audio/trend/wef-im-zeichen-der-polykrise-die-herausforderungen-haeufen-sich?id=12320800>, accessed 31. January 2023).

the primacy of cities during the last 40 years. Perhaps this assumption is premature, as the agglomeration advantages of the big cities were too strong in the past. Mountain areas proved their role as an "insurance function" for society (Perlik, 2022: 165) in the COVID-19 crisis, but when there is no need for insurance any more it is quickly forgotten. Nevertheless, it could lead to a reassessment of political decision-making processes in favor of territorial peripheries.

3. The case study area: Die Taurus Yayla's: Çamlıyayla and Meydan

Migration from rural to urban areas started in Turkey in the 1950s, making rural areas abandoned with declining agriculture production. The implementation of neoliberal policies in Turkey since the 1980s reduced the subsidies in the agricultural sector, which caused a decline in the economic activities carried out in rural areas. As a result, the rural-to-urban migration process which started in the 1950s, continued with the increase in the number of people migrating in the 1980s. This depopulation of the rural area was followed by the process of lifestyle mobility of urban residents, thanks to the increasing level of leisure and economic welfare (Somuncu, 2010; 2016; Uysal and Sakarya, 2018). At the same time, the countryside lingered in people's minds as a nostalgic memory during the rapid migration process (Mitchell et al. 2004; Short, 2005). Such attachment to the original land has developed a hope to return to the countryside, which encouraged city dwellers' mobility by reshaping the demand for recreation and the search for rural lifestyle. This situation has directed people to rural areas, especially retirees, whose relations with the city gradually decreased (Beyaz, 2019). Rural coastal areas were the first preferred places in Turkey in terms of return migration (Uysal and Sakarya, 2018). When these places became saturated, the *yaylas*, the traditional mountain pastoral summer resorts were preferred as the next unconsumed rural area (Gocer et al., 2021; Somuncu, 2010; 2016; Somuncu et al. 2012; Somuncu et al., 2019;). This process has been observed worldwide (Ooi et al. 2015; Seraphin and Dosquet, 2020).

Within the scope of this research, two mountainous settlements on the Taurus Mountains of Turkey were selected as research areas where lifestyle mobility had been observed for a long time. Neighboring Turkey's most important tourism centers, metropolises, and protected areas, the Taurus Mountains draw researchers' attention due to its rapid transformation. According to a study conducted in the Taurus Mountains in 1995, no agriculture production was found in the mountainous settlements close to the city, easy to access, and preferred for summer time (Bakır, 1995). The study's most important findings focused on the division of rural land for dwelling and leisure and disruption of the traditional architectural structure. Also, the rural production balance has deteriorated due to the consumption demand of the urbanites and the transformation of the lands from the agricultural area to the residential area. As there is no regulation of land use like zoning or spatial planning, these transformations follow market laws of offer and demand and the autochthones' willingness to stay or to leave under the given conditions.

Preliminary fieldwork was conducted to determine the research areas with a high frequency of visits by urbanites. Then, rural areas with high housing increase were determined using satellite images. Other indicators such as less or no traditional rural production, increase in the number of real estate advertisements and house prices, number of purchases and sales of title deeds, and increase in the number of water subscribers were considered. According to the parameters mentioned above, Çamlıyayla (Photo 1) at 1200m altitude and Meydan at 1150m altitude, located on the Taurus Mountains, were determined as the study area (Figure 1). Çamlıyayla is 94 km from Mersin city center and takes 2 hours by car. The Meydan is 84 km from Adana city center and takes 1.5 hours by car. Both mountainous settlements are very close to the metropolitan cities of Mersin and Adana for weekend visits.

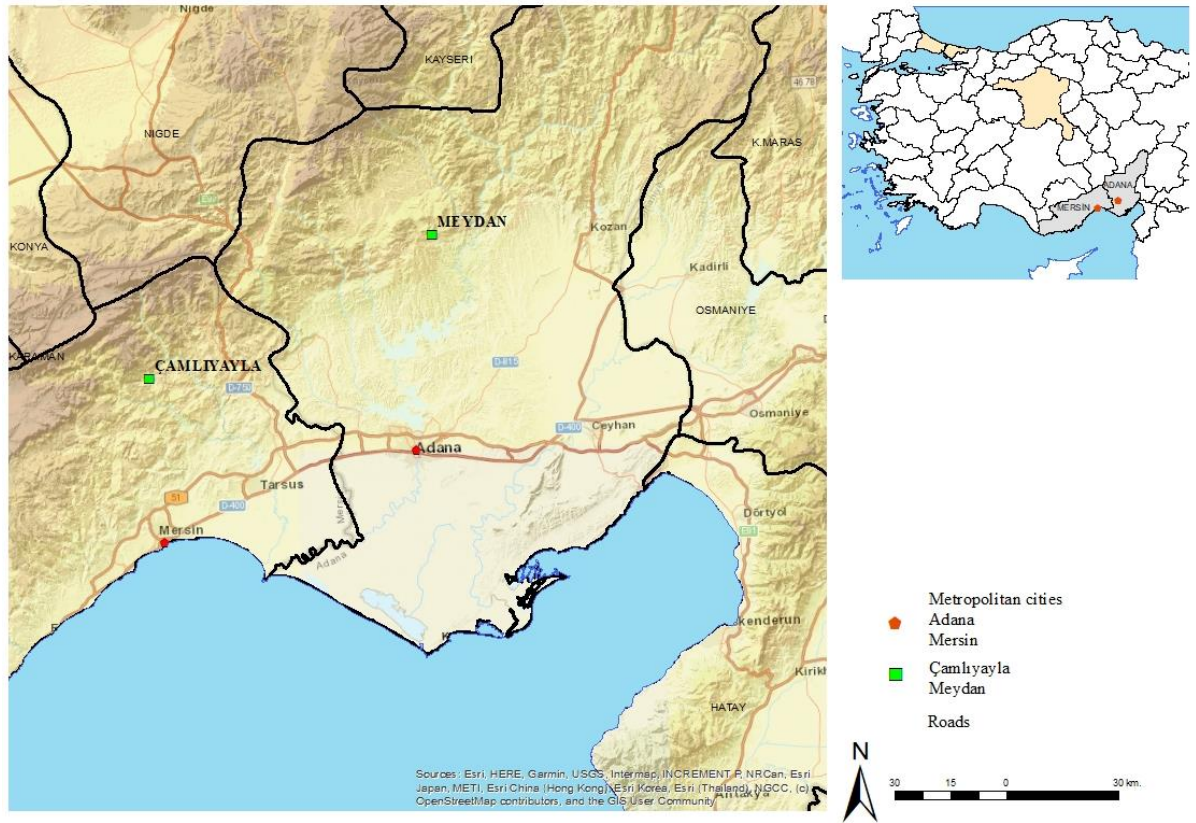


Fig 1. The location map of research areas of Çamliyayla and Meydan Yaylas. **Source:**



Photo 1. A view from Çamliyayla. **Author:**

4. Data and methods

The present study has employed a mixed-method approach to collect, analyze, and infer the findings. The mixed-method approach is preferred as triangulation to increase the validity of the results, investigate the subject in depth, and deal with complex structures. The sequential explanatory research design used in mixed methods research was adopted in the present study (Creswell, 2003). According to this design, quantitative data are collected and analyzed before collecting qualitative data. Qualitative data is obtained for in-depth exploration of the information obtained through quantitative data. As a result, the information obtained through the analysis is interpreted together.

Multiple data collection techniques were used within the scope of the mixed method to address the research questions. Observations, interviews, and questionnaires were used to obtain primary data.

First, the unattended observation technique was applied to examine the conditions existing in the natural flows and formations of events and phenomena in the large-scale field study carried out to determine the area's research problem and provide systematic and purposeful information. This technique was first applied in our research in unattended observation on June 15, 2018, and June 21, 2018. The observation form was filled during the field study, and relevant notes and photographs were taken. Hence, increased mobility and spatial change in the areas were detected with visual data during COVID-19 through observation in Meydan and Çamlıyayla.

The interview technique, which allows people to collect information about their thoughts, opinions, and experiences, was used in the present research to avoid any superficial information about the problem. It is imperative to describe the social, cultural, and economic effects of the change in the research area from the participants' perspective. In the first part of the questionnaires, there are questions to determine the demographic characteristics and income of the participants. In the second part, there are questions to understand the details of the mobility. Questions were asked about the mobility history of their previous ties to the settlement, the frequency of use of the residences in the settlement, who they traveled with, how they traveled, the motivations of the mobility and finally the activities carried out in the settlement. In-depth interviews were conducted with the leading target group of the research: the urbanites with lifestyle mobility (Table 1). The questionnaire required for the interviews was developed after the pilot study in the research area. In this context, face-to-face, in-depth interviews were conducted between July 31, 2020 and August 15, 2020. Each interview lasted 30–35 minutes, and the interview was recorded by the researcher with the participants' permission. A total of 10 detailed interviews were conducted during the fieldwork.

Tab 1. Participants profile of the research. **Source:**

	Code	Gender	Age	Location			Code	Gender	Age	Location
1	P1	Male	38	Çamlıyayla		6	P6	Kadın	63	Meydan
2	P2	Male	56	Çamlıyayla		7	P7	Female	47	Meydan
3	P3	Female	30	Çamlıyayla		8	P8	Male	59	Meydan
4	P4	Male	62	Çamlıyayla		9	P9	Male	65	Meydan
5	P5	Female	58	Çamlıyayla		10	P10	Female	61	Meydan

Another technical questionnaire was used in the study to collect primary data. The population of the questionnaire survey included the people with lifestyle mobility from Adana Meydan and Mersin Çamlıyayla districts. According to Turkish Bureau of Statistics (TUIK) data for 2019, the total population of Meydan is 1046 people, while the total population of Çamlıyayla is 4048. However, as the entire population is based on ADNKS (Address Based Population Registration System) data, there is no data on the number of those who have made mobility or have a second home. Since people who use their second homes, only come to the area different periods, are registered in the region of their permanent residence. In this context, sometimes in the studies related to second housing, it has been tried to determine the number of second houses in the area according to the number of water subscriptions belonging to

the municipality. In addition, there is no statistical data on tourists and daily visitors visiting mountainous settlements.

For this reason, the non-probabilistic sampling method was adopted, and the participation of the maximum target audience was ensured with the snowball sampling strategy. The most crucial criterion for respondents' involvement in the research was the status as homeowner or tenant for permanent or seasonal use in the settlement. As a result, 114 people participated in the survey.

Secondary data was used to support the primary data within the scope of the research. For this purpose, data sets consisting of population statistics, the number of water subscribers of residences and workplaces, and real estate advertisements were collected.

The population statistics of Çamlıyayla and Meydan used in the research were obtained from the Turkish Bureau of Statistics (TUIK) database, published regularly every year. The population dataset between 2007 and 2019 was used and analyzed in the present study.

The lack of statistical information on those who perform mobility in rural settlements led researchers to use different secondary data sources. Within this framework, inferences can be made about the change in housing density in the territories in recent years by reaching the number of water subscribers in rural settlements from local governments.

It is well known that the leading target group of the research, the urban-based individuals with lifestyle mobility, creates a housing demand in rural settlements. The most frequently used online real estate site for the sale and rent of residences in Turkey, sahibinden.com, has also been examined within this frame of reference. Accordingly, with the search made on 28/01/2021, the qualities and prices of houses in the advertisements were reviewed to understand how the demand affected the housing market in rural settlements.

The data provided by various techniques were analyzed together to detect the spatial pattern of the lifestyle mobility phenomenon. In this framework, firstly, the classified data were evaluated to generate valid information about how the lifestyle mobility in rural settlements took place, how this mobility affected the real estate market in the settlements and the future trends of this process. Thus, the findings provided by various data techniques have been complementary to factual integrity.

Because the buildings of rural settlements are relatively less dense due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the target population avoids receiving guests in their residences, the researcher met with everyone in reach and continued to stay in the field until the data was cross-checked. Ethical principles have also complied with the scope of the research.

5. Results

5.1 Visible decline and seemingly growth: The differentiation of Turkey's rural areas

Turkey's rural areas have continuously lost population since the 1950s (Tekeli, 2016; Somuncu, 2010; 2016). This trend has increased with the loss of importance of rural production, especially since the 2000s. (Figure 2). For instance, when the annual GDP in Turkey is examined, it is seen that while the agricultural activities were 13.5% in 1998, it was 6.9% in 2017. In addition, while the total agricultural area was 40,967 thousand hectares in 2001, it decreased to 37,716 thousand hectares in 2009 (TUIK, 2021). It is necessary to mention Law No. 6360, adopted in 2012 and implemented on 30.03.2014, to describe the population change. With the Law of Metropolitan Municipalities (5216th), the metropolitan municipality numbers upgraded from 16 to 30, and all metropolitan municipality borders were expanded to the provincial borders up to the end of the mentioned year. Within the framework of this law while the authority border of metropolitan areas enlarged, changes were made to the administrative status of many town municipalities and villages which were in, or on the fringes of, metropolitan areas. There is also a gradual decrease in production-based functions in rural areas.

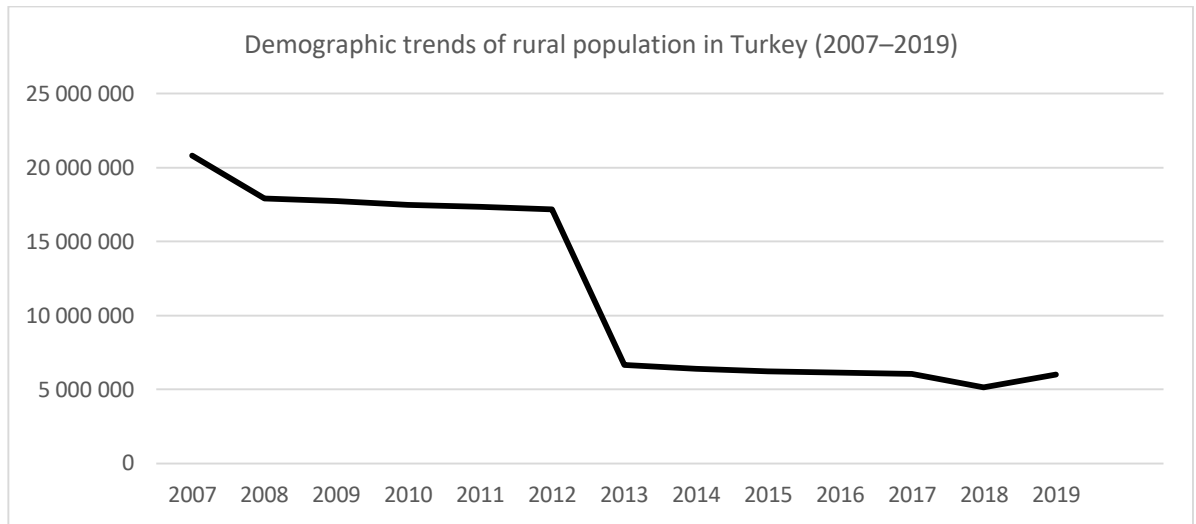


Fig 2. Demographic trends of the rural population in Turkey, 2007–2019. Source: authors analyses based on TUIK

Contrary to the general trend in rural settlements in Turkey, some rural settlements saw a development where the population growth rate is prolonged, or the population remains stagnant. These rural areas are considered important due to increased lifestyle mobility.

Çamlıyayla had a dramatic increase in the district's population after the adoption of the law mentioned above in 2012 (Figure 3a). Administratively, the settlements were turned from villages to towns in connection with this law. At the same time, new decisions based on closing the local municipalities and connecting them to the district municipalities led to the expansion of the service area of Çamlıyayla. Therefore, the population increase in Figure 3 should be interpreted independently of the form of mobility.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the settlement population did not decrease, unlike many rural settlements. Therefore, it is inferred that the slow rate of decrease in the population of the settlements is due to increase in lifestyle mobility. Similarly, stagnant population development is observed in Meydan, a much smaller rural settlement compared to Çamlıyayla (Figure 3b). The population growth data provide a different picture compared to population charts of many other rural settlements in Turkey. The most important reason for such drastic differences is an increase in lifestyle mobility in these areas.

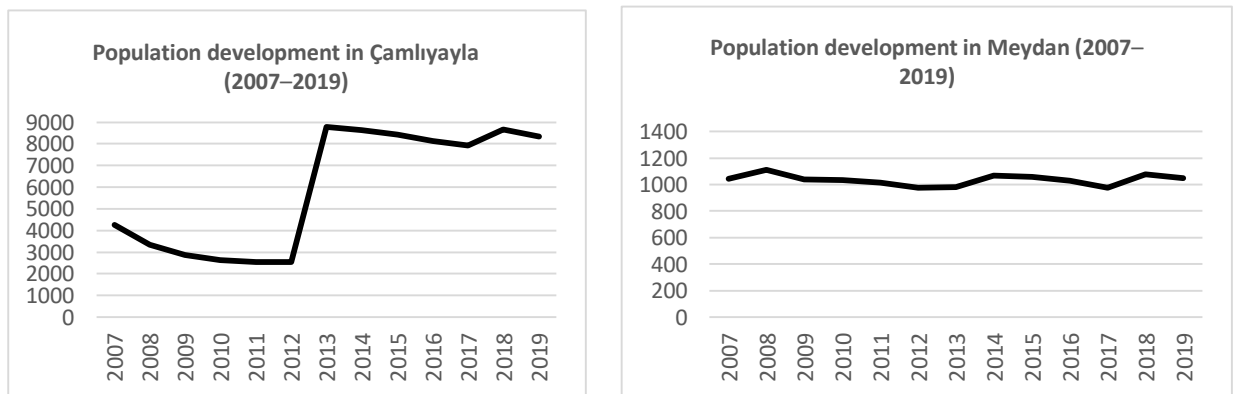


Fig 3 (a) and (b). Population development of rural settlements in Taurus Mountains, 2007–2019. Source: authors analyses based on TUIK

It is argued that urbanites with lifestyle mobility use their residences in the city and in the countryside. However, their official residence addresses belong to their residences in the city. This situation makes it difficult to determine how many people live in rural areas. For this reason, the rural population is shown constantly decreasing or appears to be stagnant in the general censuses in many rural settlements. The absence of a positive trend in the population change graph does not mean the lack of any urban-to-

rural mobility. At this point, an inference can be made from the number of drinking water subscribers. According to the water subscription applied by all homeowners, old and new, a continuous increase has been observed in the number of residences in the study area since 2015 (Figure 4a and 4b).

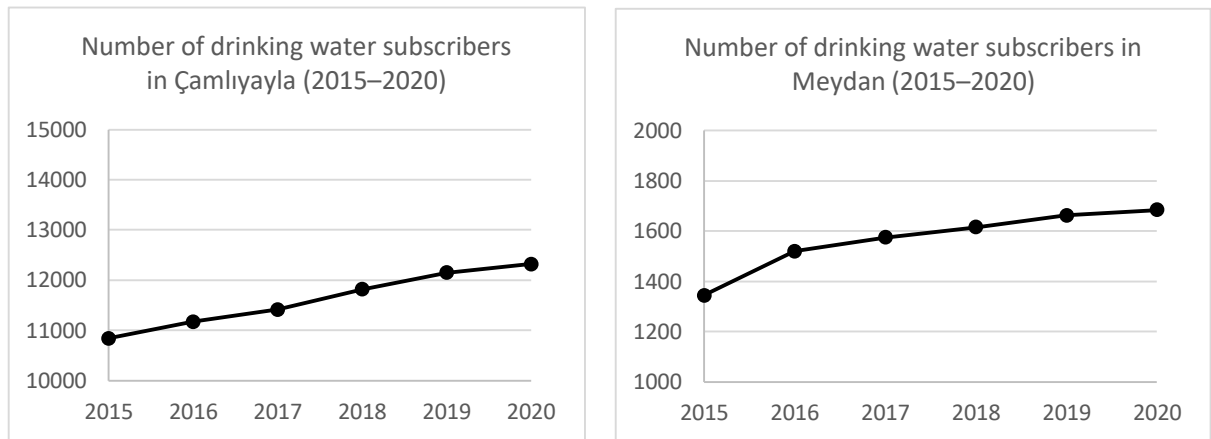


Fig 4 (a) and (b). The number of drinking water subscribers' settlements in Çamlıyayla and Meydan, 2015–2020. Source: authors analyses based on DSİ (the Turkish water authority)

The examination of the age range of the participants interviewed in the research areas revealed that most individuals belonged to the 45–64 age group in both selected rural settlements (Figure 5a). The average age of participants with lifestyle mobility was 56. These findings indicate that most individuals visiting rural areas frequently in the research area were retired or nearing retirement or retiring.

P10 explains:

The urbanites living in mountain settlements are all old ones. Those who come to visit here are mostly retired. In the past, people often visited and stayed in “Yayla” (temporary settlement in mountain pastures) to escape the hot weather of lowlands cities and mosquitoes. But now there are no mosquitoes in lowlands, and people also have the facility of air conditioning. Everyone's home has become a “Yayla” nowadays. People like to go to shopping malls to cool off. That's why young people don't want to come. Retirees come here mostly. Young people love the sea; they do not want to stay in “Yayla”. We cannot persuade the children to visit and stay here. They do not visit here due to the absence of the internet.

Analysis of the gender distribution of the participants revealed a predominance of males with 78.4% (Figure 5b). During the field research, the extensive and closed gardens of the houses in settlements reduced the visibility of women in the settlement. This situation explains the difference in gender distribution of the participants reached during the fieldwork.

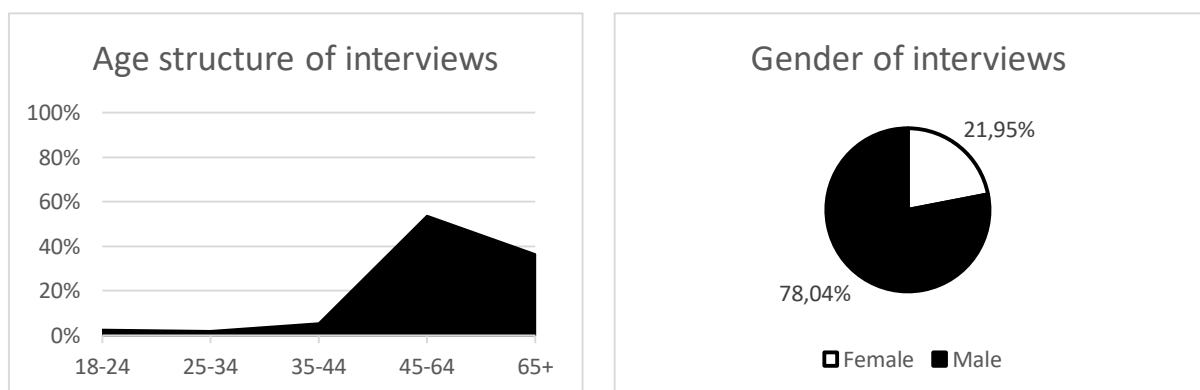


Fig 5 (a) and (b). Structure of lifestyle mobility residents sample (case study Çamlıyayla and Meydan, n=100). Source: authors' fieldwork in 2020

The length of stay of those who carry out lifestyle mobility in rural settlements varies seasonally. It is found that 73.17% of the participants move to rural settlements during the summer months as the physical conditions of the houses are not sufficient for use in the winter months. Therefore, it is evident that the trend of lifestyle mobility in the research area is higher during the summer months. The participants also supported this view in the interviews.

P3 explains:

Usually, there are no other visitors except locals here in winter. The houses are not insulated. There are no heating stoves, not much to do in the winter.

With the emergence of COVID-19 in Turkey in March 2020, changes in the trend of lifestyle mobility started to emerge. There is no historical statistical data on the mobility from the city to the countryside during this period. However, within the scope of the present study, questions were asked about the changes in the mobility patterns in the research area with the onset of COVID-19. Accordingly, changes in the season of mobility were observed at first. The residences in both settlements were used only in the summer months before the outbreak; however, the period was found extended with the onset of the epidemic (Figure 6). Since the decision of lockdown in Turkey as of March 10, 2019, the urbanites started to move towards rural residences to avoid the epidemic and the restriction on social freedom. This situation set off the season earlier in March 2020. P5, one of the local administrators, explains the situation as follows:

Our “Yayla”, which is generally crowded in July-August, has become a shelter for people since March, with the start of the pandemic. The area was overcrowded with masses in March. Telecommunication networks were choked, and internet services became limited.

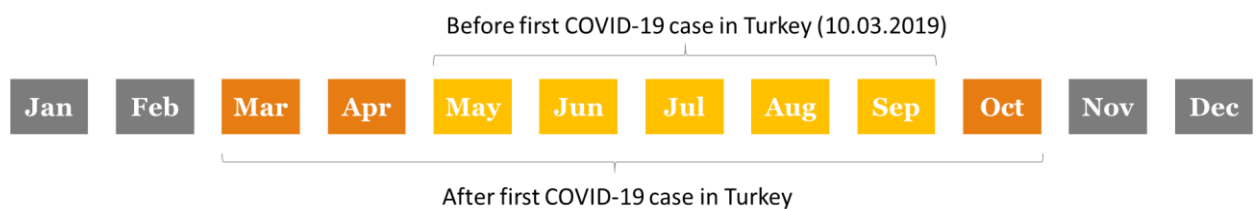


Fig 6. Change in seasonal lifestyle mobility during COVID-19. Source: authors' fieldwork in 2020

Urban residents who moved to rural areas stated that they hosted themselves and their acquaintances and relatives in their residences after the epidemic. Even mobility of young families was observed who otherwise never visited rural settlements before COVID-19. P8 explains:

We have hosted many guests since the start of the epidemic. Our frequency of visits to this rural settlement has also increased. Young people always want to go to the seaside, but with the epidemic this started to change. Here, 100 m² house can be built on 1000 m² land, while 900 m² must be spared as green space. This situation gives people freedom and allows them to escape from the ban.

The examination of the historical background of mobility in the study area disclosed that the mobility was carried out only in the summer months for decades. At the same time, due to the impact of COVID-19, it started earlier and ended later in the last two years. On the other hand, considering the physical conditions of the residences, it has been observed that those who carry out the lifestyle mobility movement improve the needs of their homes.

5.2 The Yayla as insurance against the COVID-19-crisis

Rapid urbanization by lifestyle mobility were already continued in the study areas before the first COVID-19 case in Turkey. However, it has undergone significant changes due to the sudden increase in mobility during COVID-19. The local economy has been positively affected, primarily due to the prolonged stay of the urbanites moving to the countryside. P9 from the participants explains:

Our butcher shop and bakery were not closed this winter. We usually only work in the summer season. Visitors were staying from Friday evening until Monday morning due to the pandemic. They kept up the butcher shop and bakery.

However, the revival in the local economy was not just for the shopkeepers. Undoubtedly, the highest density in this period was experienced in the real estate market. Due to the sudden demand of the citizens, house sales accelerated, rental houses were occupied, and land sales were made for the construction of new homes. An analysis has been made on the biggest application in which real estate shopping is done in Turkey. It provides estimated data based on statistical model by making use of sahibinden.com data from the last years over detailed criteria on the basis of districts and neighborhoods in all provinces in Turkey. Since it gives the average of previous years, the exact day of the inquiry is not important. According to the housing index analysis obtained from one of Turkey's most influential real estate sales sites, the m² price of the land changed significantly from November 2017 to May 2021. Accordingly, following the outbreak in March 2020, the price of m² for sale started to rise suddenly in May (Figure 7).

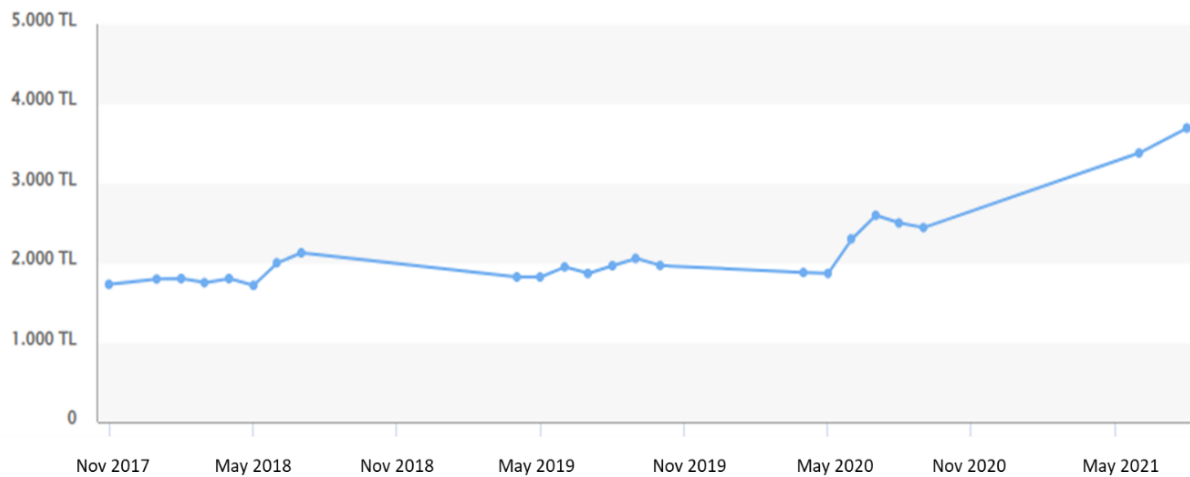


Fig 7. Residential Property Prices Indices (RPPI) analysis in Çamlıyayla, from November 2017 to May 2021. Source: <https://www.sahibinden.com/emlak360/emlak-endeksi>. Date of access is 08.12.2021

These findings were also supported by interviews conducted during fieldwork. All the participants were aware of the change in the prices. A participant who is a real estate agent explains the situation as follows (P2):

Prices increased rapidly after the pandemic. I had a deal yesterday (04.04.2020) in the title deed. Land registry officers were very busy due to the heavy workload. I saw many people, which were from outside of our region, here coming to buy houses. The increased demand had already increased house prices in the area. From the beginning of the epidemic in March until May, we quickly sold all the 15 houses we owned in a month. We didn't try to sell the houses, the customers found us by themselves. There had never been so many buyers of houses from outside areas. Previously, most people came here to visit their relatives. This area is a place they know and love. The "Yayla" is getting more and more crowded. There are no longer any rental homes for the summer of 2021. People have added their names to waiting lists for renting a house.

Increasing prices and the dynamism in the real estate market appeared as an opportunity for the local people in rural settlements. Selling their houses and lands at high prices, the local people realize their

dream of living in the city by buying an apartment in the city center (Photo 2a and 2b). Again, a real estate agent from the field summarized the situation as follows (P1):

The houses for sale are sold out, we started to sell land, but we don't have any land now. We bought land and built homes to meet the demand of buyers. We follow local people who want to sell their places and try to buy land from them. The local people have started to sell land as prices are increasing in general. They are looking to sell it while the property is appreciated. One local resident of this area sold 3 acres of land and bought a house in the city. The family has sold their inheritance, but they will hardly get an inch of land from here in the future.



Photo 2 (a) and (b). A house and piece of forest land put up for sale by a local resident in Meydan. **Author:**

The first preference of the urbanites to settle in the rural vicinity is to find constructed residences. However, due to shortage of for sale houses, building of new houses by purchasing land has accelerated (Photo 3). The chief of Meydan who is also construction master, shares important information on this subject:

There is no house to rent here. New houses are being built now. This year (2020) 110 constructions that I know of have started.



Photo 3. Two examples of active construction work started in 2020 Meydan. **Author:**

The accelerated mobility of the urbanites towards rural settlements has also expedited the urbanization in rural areas. It is a well-established fact that the newcomers try to seek the comfort of the city in the countryside with an urban perspective. In this sense, the effect of the urban view can be observed in newly built houses (Photo 4a and 4b).

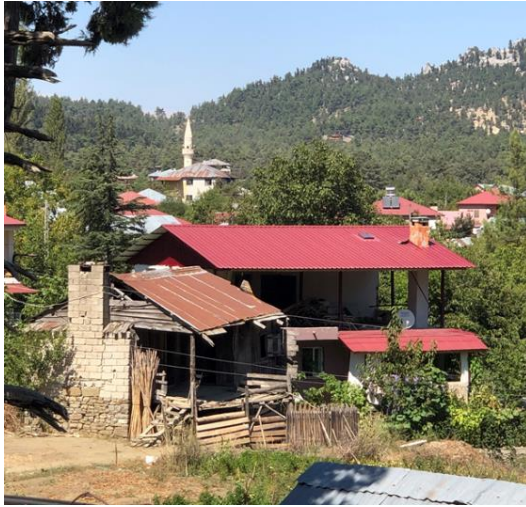


Photo 4 (a). An example of a new house built next to the old traditional broken-down house and newly built house in Çamlıyayla (b). Urban residents who move outside the settlement area into new villas with large gardens and high walls in Çamlıyayla. **Author:**

Urban residents who move outside the settlement area into new villas with large gardens and high walls.

5.3 A continuing trend of urban-to-rural migration?

Considering the situation of rural settlements, which are in a state of constant change, questions were asked from the participants to determine their future intention to settle permanently in rural areas. It was found that 70% of the participants from Çamlıyayla and 95% from Meydan do not intend to stay forever in the rural residences. These statements correspond to former estimations (Perlik, 2011) as well as to recent interviews led during the pandemic in Australia (Ramachandran, 2021). Considering the nature of the traditional and seasonal mobility carried out in the region, the participants act following the cultural norms of the area. P8:

This “Yayla” cannot be abandoned forever as it is against the culture of this area. People must come to visit here in summer.

On the other hand, in response to the risks to external factors such as climate change and the COVID-19 epidemic, the participants predicted that the demand for rural mountainous settlements would increase in the future. P4:

I think our area will be more prevalent in the future. The epidemic will revive this place. If the epidemic continues, considering that all the houses here are summer houses, it will be a big problem that they are not insulated for winter. After the end of Corona, some other virus will emerge; this is a biological war. The highlands should be ready for this.

P10:

These places would be more crowded as transportation will become easier and work from home will increase. No local will remain here, and foreigners will settle the area. They will only buy houses and not produce anything. The rich people used to purchase homes. Those not in good economic condition have started to get into debt and buy houses through loans and credits.

6. Discussion: How to interpret these results?

By way of a mix-methods design, our study aimed to explore how existing lifestyle mobility affects rural and alpine gentrification processes. The study period fell during the main phase of the Corona epidemic. This made the interview programme of the field studies considerably more difficult. At the same time, the focus of the questions could be enlarged. The original question of the character of mobility (multilocality, amenity migration, periburbanisation) moved into the background in favour of interpreting the effects of the crisis on the territorial relationship between centres and periphery. The results of the statistical analyses refer still to the period before COVID-19. These data already show the broadening of the social practice of using second homes in the course of prosperity spread to new urban middle class strata. The results of the interviews show the immediate reactions during the crisis: These do not consist in a reversal of the trend, but in an expansion of the use of existing second homes and an increased demand for such homes. On the other hand, permanent relocation to the mountains, is more or less explicitly excluded. The crisis thus does not provoke a new trend but reinforces existing urbanization trends and makes them more visible. This coincides with other countries like, for example, France (POPSU Territories, 2022).

In detail, we have gained the following insights: In the statistical analyses we found a lifestyle mobility trend in study area already before the pandemic. It explains the slowdown in the rate of depopulation in rural and mountainous areas. Particularly, retired people are participating this mobility. But this practice concerns summertime second home use of a mobile urban population and does not stop the rural exodus, as the previous functions like local way of life, short supply chains are abandoned and the social fabric changes. Rather, an expansion of metropolitan regions into the countryside takes place in the form of both a functional incorporation of rural areas into existing metropolitan regions, in our case Adana and Mersin. And, on the other hand, through the growth of peri-urban belts around the core areas of metropolitan regions, by continued out-migration. In this sense, our results from the Taurus mountains confirm similar processes as have been identified earlier for the Alps with the linkage between their fringes and the large metropolitan areas like Munich and Zurich on the northern side and Milan and Turin on the southern side.

Our main research question for this paper was how the existing trend was affected by COVID-19. The results of the research show that COVID-19 gave another huge push to the linkage between the urban residences in the metropolitan areas and the second home summer residences as these residences were used more intensive and during a longer period between spring and autumn. The fact that urban residents are becoming more and more multilocal despite COVID-19 (Chapin and Roy, 2021) and the domestic nature of their mobility make rural and mountainous areas important for a crisis situation. In this respect, mountain areas play the role of insurance against rare or as yet unknown risks. Access to second homes expands urban residents' options for action and at the same time dynamises their social practices. When the COVID-19 cases occurred, they felt forced to decide rapidly to spend the summer in the mountain area.

As in developed countries before, individuals in emerging countries develop consumption patterns and preferences which were in the past restricted to upper classes or richer countries. In emerging countries like Turkey, one of the indispensable commodities in the recipe of upcoming middle classes for a happy life, in recent times, is a residence in the countryside. This trend set in already before COVID-19. Findings coincide with the impact on the real estate market in other countries of the global South. However, this effect is increasing with the recent political and economic practices in Turkey. In order to ensure economic mobility in the period of COVID-19, public banks provided a mortgage with no payment in the first year, for 10 to 15 years between June 2020 and August 2020. These home loans with attractive interest rates of 0.64 and 0.74% (Usanmaz, 2021). This decision had multiple consequences: First, with the decreased mortgages, the static housing market became dynamic by rising demands. Property owners in the yaylas were able to increase prices. Secondly, although mortgages have returned to old values, rising housing prices did not decrease (as one could expect). Thirdly, at the same time, prices increased also in urban areas because of the public banks campaign. Middle class people having difficulties in purchasing real estate in the urban area were directed on the housing market in rural or peri-urban areas. The economic

crisis in the wake of COVID-19 made has raised the costs of construction which forms an additional reason for high housing costs. This situation also affected the local people in rural and mountainous areas, where the low-income people mostly live. The consequence: The reasons for the inadequacy of education and health services, the low benefits from agricultural production, and the desire to access the comfort of urban life make local people sell their houses and lands in a situation which they perceived as both a necessity and a rare opportunity. In addition, local people also changed their livelihood from agriculture and crafting to activities depending on the second housing market sectors such as construction, small services, sales and marketing. In fact it is a displacement due to the different productivities of the urban and the rural milieu. This is a new impact directly in the aftermath of COVID-19, as serious gentrification processes, were not yet known before in this dimension (Kocabiyik and Loopmans, 2021). This is what we call urbanization in mountainous areas. In turn, the sub- and peri-urban fringes close to the metropolitan core areas in the lowlands are expanding.

Another impact of the COVID-19 induced stays in the Yaylas concerns the functioning of the municipal life. Due to the high numbers of population during summertime, municipal services were disrupted and telephone and internet networks were overcharged. For jurisdictions, normally, an increase in population and in new economic or political functions could raise their importance as their growth may move it up in the national urban hierarchy. This would make them more visible and gave them advantages to profit from political decisions like in case of infrastructure development. But in our case, these flows are not documented as the permanent address of the newcomers remains at their urban residence. A change in demand and offers is blurred and benefits and costs were not made transparent and correctly compensated. On the other hand, metropolitan areas can profit from yaylas transformed to renowned resort towns as it increases their agglomeration effects. In this way, they can provide new *attractivity* by recreational and cultural opportunities for a highly skilled workforce which other metropolitan areas do not have. Furthermore, the metropolises can raise their *adaptability* on changed demands of their population and potential newcomers. In contrary to the mountain municipalities they can increase their rank in the urban hierarchy and may demonstrate a new *authority* (the “Triple A” of metropolitan regions, Perlik, 2019).

The evolving differentiation between lowland metropolitan areas and highland resort towns correspond to the current mainstream trajectory, in which regional and national decision-makers alike strive for the greatest possible differentiation of territories in order to be able to valorize single places under the label of specific landscapes more efficiently, i.e., by replacing weak value chains. This is often done with arguments of tourism, ecological reasoning or a mixture of both (“green tourism”) (Kirmizi, 2022; Naitthani and Kanthola, 2015; Narain and Singh, 2019), sometimes against strong protest from the local people who risk losing their position and having to leave. In our case, the displacement due to international tour operators, investors or direct state intervention is not yet the main aspect as the regional urbanites coming to the Yaylas do not show other great mobility (business- or long-distance travel). But this also means that these population of the lower middle class strata usually carry little foreign knowledge into the localities of their second homes. For this reason, the level of protection of local architecture, protection of nature and contribution to local policies is low as in other rural areas of Turkey (Gocer et al., 2021; Kocabiyik and Loopmans, 2021). But finally the result is comparable to those places with an international clientele: a latent displacement by rising land prices. The negative impact is even stronger as second home owners during the interviews expressed that they do not wish to stay permanently. This is understandable, considering the reasons such as the difficult winter conditions in the region, the residences being suitable for living only in summer, the inadequacy of the heating systems, the insufficient health services for the elderly population. Thus, there is no in-migration which could compensate the ongoing out-migration.

7. Final Conclusion and outlook

The seasonal migration of populations from two metropolitan regions to rural summer residences was investigated. This current form of alternating residences between urban and rural areas has existed for a long time and has its historical origins in the traditional long-distance pastoral economy, with regular

alternation between winter and summer residences. With the economic and population growth of the large metropolitan regions on the mountainous fringes of the Taurus and at the same time on the Mediterranean, second homes also became attractive to new urban strata of the population without a rural connection, first on the coast, and later, when these places were no longer affordable, in the mountains. This process of rural and alpine gentrification was already underway before the COVID-19 crisis and driven by the dynamic economic growth of Turkey's metropolitan regions. The pandemic has only accentuated this practice.

With this development, Turkey is following the model of multi-local second home use known from the Alps in particular, but also from Scandinavia and other mountain regions. This is in contrast to the experiences in the USA, which often involve permanent migration practices. The most prominent differences, however, are the legal and administrative gaps, the weakness of local governments and the uncontrolled implementation of neoliberal policies.

The COVID-19 crisis has further accelerated this development. On the one hand, through the more intensive and longer use of summer residences, which was extended from normally about 5 to 8 months. Secondly, by a significant increase in demand for housing or land in the mountains, which has abruptly dynamised the previously rather static real estate market. After 10 March 2020, when the first COVID-19 case occurred in Turkey, property prices have risen abruptly. This, in turn, has led to locals, who can realise a high return on their properties in the real estate market, selling houses and plots of land. As a result, we see an inverse movement: by selling their houses, the locals migrate to the cities in taking their chance to enter the urban labour market. The COVID-19 crisis thus proves to be instructive in two respects: On the one hand, it reinforces and clarifies processes that are already taking place and thus makes them more understandable, also in the sense of initiating possible counter-trends. On the other hand, it also generates direct, irreversible effects in the territorial relations between metropolises and hinterlands.

However, the current development does not allow for a forecast. The majority of interviewees stated that they had no intention of moving permanently to the countryside. Thus, the second home takes on the role of an insurance in times of crisis, as was already the case in the Middle Ages with the plague, but today with a wider circle of beneficiaries than then. This does not mean a reversal of the trend – on the contrary. Nevertheless, signals of counter-trends should be heeded, as they have recently become visible through the partial resurgence of a neo-rural movement in other European countries. We see therefore our study as a starting point for further research on the extent to which the current global crises might have an impact on future territorial development, i.e., to what extent the main trends toward metropolitan concentration and rural exodus observed so far might be slowed down or, in certain cases, reversed.

One might imagine other, more sustainable trajectories from the current multiple crisis of COVID-19, climate and war: Already during the Greek financial crisis at the end of the 2000s, studies reported that young unemployed people returned to their agriculturally structured places of origin to restart their professional life there (Kasimis and Papadopoulos, 2013). More recently, a new study on the COVID-19 impacts in the Indian mountain state of Uttarakhand shows even more optimistic countertendencies: In the Himalayas, the lack of jobs made since a long the young generation migrating abroad in order to support their families with remittances. With the result that not only the families but also the national economies have become dependent on these earnings. In a study based on over 800 questionnaires Joshi et al. identified both negative and positive impacts of the COVID-19 crisis in 16 rural villages of Kailash. Among the positive impacts they saw that agricultural production remained stable and, most importantly, that many young people came back and began to create their own activities at their original place (Joshi et al., 2022).

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