

**ISSUES OF URBANIZATIONS IN KYRGYZSTAN:
NEW SETTLEMENTS OF BISHKEK**

Author:

Mirlan Alymbaev¹
University of Debrecen (Hungary)
(Kirghizia)

Reviewers:

Gábor Biczó (Ph.D)
University of Debrecen

Norbert Tóth (Ph.D)
University of Debrecen

...and two other anonymous reviewers

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Abstract

Urbanization in Kyrgyzstan, in particular the capital city of Bishkek faces the rapid growth of new settlements that often outpaces the developmental issues such as infrastructure, housing shortages, social services, employment, environmental impact, cultural and social integration, security, land ownership and property rights. These issues can be complex, and lead to disputes and uncertainty for residents. This can hinder development in new settlements. Efforts to address these urbanization issues in new settlements around Bishkek city should involve comprehensive urban planning, infrastructure development, land management, and social policies. It's essential to ensure that urbanization contributes to improved living conditions and opportunities for all residents, fostering sustainable and inclusive growth.

Keywords: Urbanization, New Settlements, Bishkek, Ethnicity, Migration, Novostroyki, Kelechek.

Diszcipline: Cultural Anthropology, Ethnography

Absztrakt

AZ URBANIZÁCIÓ KÉRDÉSEI KIRGIZISZTÁNBAN: BISKEK ÚJ TELEPÜLÉSEI

A kirgizisztáni urbanizáció az új települések gyors növekedésével szembeesül (különösen a főváros, Biskek esetében), amelyet gyakran megelőznek az olyan fejlesztési kérdések, mint az infrastruktúra, a lakáshiány, a szociális szolgáltatások, a foglalkoztatás, a környezeti hatások, a kulturális és társadalmi integráció, a biztonság, a földtulajdon és a tulajdonjog. Ezek a kérdések összetettek, vitákat generálnak és bizonytalansághoz vezetnek a lakosság körében, ami akadályozhatja az új települések fejlődését. A Biskek város körüli új településeken az urbanizációs problémák kezelésére irányuló erőfeszítéseknek átfogó

¹ Alymbaev Mirlan. Department of Ethnography, Faculty of Arts, University of Debrecen, Program of Ethnography and Cultural Anthropology, PhD School of History and Ethnography (Hungary) (Kirghizia). ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0969-0282>

várostervezést, infrastruktúra-fejlesztést, földgazdálkodást és szociálpolitikát kell magukban foglalniuk. Alapvető fontosságú annak biztosítása, hogy az urbanizáció hozzájáruljon az életkörülmények és lehetőségek javulásához minden lakos számára, elősegítve a fenntartható és inkluzív növekedést.

Kulcsszavak: urbanizáció, új települések, Biskek, etnikum, migráció, Novostroyki, Kelecheck.

Diszciplína: kulturális antropológia, néprajz

Introduction

The post-Soviet era in Kyrgyzstan has brought about complex processes encompassing political, economic, and social changes. These transformations have been accompanied by significant migration, both internal and external. Factors such as the wide disparity in living standards between rural and urban areas, high poverty rates (33.1% in 2021) (National Statistics Committee, 2021: 30), limited employment opportunities, particularly in rural regions, as well as unequal access to utilities and education, have driven the predominantly rural population to migrate.

One notable consequence of this post-Soviet period is the emergence and growth of settlements known as "new settlements" surrounding the capital city, Bishkek. These areas have attracted internal migrants from various regions across the country. This phenomenon of population concentration in urban centers aligns with the urbanization observed in post-colonial and third-world countries (Davis, 2007: 2). In this regard, Kyrgyzstan, along with other post-Soviet states, falls into the category of third-world countries.

Status of Kyrgyzstan as an agrarian nation is characterized by approximately two-thirds of its population residing in rural areas. In 2022, the National Statistical Committee reported a population of 5,143.5 million, with around 35% living in urban areas (1,830.4 million) and approximately 65% in rural areas (3,313.1 million). Bishkek, the capital city, and its adjacent regions offer the most appealing prospects to the population due to relatively prosperous economic indicators and

employment opportunities (National Statistics Committee, 2022: 301).

Therefore, Bishkek exemplifies a microcosm of the global urbanization process. In this study, urbanization refers to the phenomenon of urban population growth resulting from the influx of rural residents and the expansion of the city itself through the incorporation of expanding suburbs or the establishment and development of new settlements, commonly referred to as "novostroika" in the local context. The primary focus lies in examining the changes that arise from the active interaction between rural and urban populations.

This article aims to provide a comprehensive rationale for my field research conducted between 2022 and 2023 in one of Bishkek's new settlements "Kelecheck" and slightly in "Archa-Beshik". The research delves into analyzing the interconnected process of population growth in the capital city, primarily driven by internal migration. The analysis is conducted within the broader context of global urbanization. Special attention is devoted to studying the new settlements of Bishkek as manifestations and consequences of urbanization. Additionally, the article briefly outlines the findings of my research on the dynamics of Kyrgyz identity within the framework of urbanization. The fieldwork lasted for four months: July-August 2022, November 2022 - January 2023. For the purpose of comparative analysis, observations and interviews were also conducted in another new settlement, Ak-Orgo, in March-April 2023.

The main objective of this research is to analyze the nuances of Kyrgyz identity in the context of

urbanization, exploring adaptive strategies and mechanisms employed by individuals from rural and urban backgrounds. Furthermore, the study seeks to analyze the potential for integration among individuals from diverse regions and clans in urban settings.

Bishkek as a Model of the Global Urbanization Process

The development of settlements, primarily slums, around major cities, in our case, new settlements, is a natural global process of urbanization, which is one of the direct consequences of migration. Researchers note that the main demographic event of the 20th century is the decrease in rural population and the sharp growth of urban population.

According to the theory of Michael Todaro and Stephen Smith (Todaro and Smith, 2012: 144-145), cities in developing countries, including Kyrgyzstan, are growing faster than cities in developed countries. The growth of cities in developing countries is primarily driven by shantytowns (spontaneously formed settlements) and similar makeshift settlements. Stewart Brand and Joe Kammi also highlight this pattern. They note that in developing countries, urbanization and the flow of rural population to cities are accompanied by land encroachments and the growth of slums, which they call squatter cities (cities illegally occupied by squatters on unoccupied land or illegally occupied houses). Approximately one billion people, or one-sixth of the world's population, live in these settlements, and according to the authors, this number will increase to two billion. They also point out that migration and urbanization processes lead to changes in people's relationship with place, with each other, and with the state (government) over the past decades (Brand and Kammi, 2006: 69).

The characteristic feature of the growth of such settlements is their speed. For example, Flanagan illustrates the speed of the emergence of squatters by giving the emic (Flanagan, 1999: 161, 22) term

"pueblas paracaidistas" used by the residents of Mexico City, which means that an entire self-built town appeared overnight, as if people descended on parachutes. A parachute is a device used to slow the motion of an object through an atmosphere by creating drag or, in a ram-air parachute, aerodynamic lift. A major application is to support people, for recreation or as a safety device for aviators, who can exit from an aircraft at height and descend safely to earth.

Bishkek is no exception to the rapid growth of its surrounding areas due to new settlements developments. In Bishkek, the landscape of a field can be transformed within one summer, as people rush to build, at least, the foundation, knowing that their plot may be taken by someone else, as one informant described:

"In 2000, we received a plot of land in Dordoi-1 [one of the two relatively new settlements on the eastern side of the Dordoi market - A.A.]. My acquaintance got a plot of land next to mine. Our families went together to our plots to mark their boundaries, pray, and decided to start construction the following spring. I remember when we first came to the field, there was only grass and nothing more. When we came the next spring, we were bewildered: so many houses had been built that we had a hard time finding our plot. We were lucky that our plot was not occupied. But someone else had already started construction on my acquaintance's plot. Can you imagine how, in just a few months, the field turned into a village!" (field note from 10.09.2022).

According to the media, there are about 47 new settlements (Ibraimov, 2018: 3-4) around the capital city today, with a sharp increase observed immediately after the revolution events happened on March, 2005.

For comparison, the newspaper "MSN" on February 16, 2006, reported about 29 new settlements, but in the issue from November 26 of the same year, it refers to information from the

Bishkek City Architecture Department, which mentions 41 new settlements around the capital.

Todaro and Smith's theory emphasizes the dualistic nature of urban development in many developing countries, where the formal modern sector exists alongside a vast informal urban sector. The informal sector employs approximately half of the urban workforce and is characterized by low skill levels, low productivity, self-employment, limited value-added activities, engagement in small-scale commerce and services, and a workforce comprised of recent migrants. Paradoxically, while migration to cities is motivated by the low incomes prevalent in rural areas, the informal urban workforce generates about one-third of the urban income and provides opportunities for the employment of unskilled labor and the utilization of corresponding technologies, albeit with persistent high levels of unemployment. Todaro and Smith view migration more as a symptom and an economic backwardness factor rather than a population growth driver.

According to the theories discussed, the modern city of Bishkek, with its new settlements, is seen as a typical outcome of migration and urbanization in a globalizing economy. The long-term movement of rural populations to the capital, which began in the early 1990s and intensified in the early 2000s, has led to the development of an informal labor sector in Bishkek. This sector offers various types of work that don't require specific qualifications.

The city's markets, particularly Dordoy and Osh, play a significant role in attracting migrants and forming the informal sector. Migrants engage in small-scale trading or work as vendors, selling goods on behalf of the owners. The markets also provide services like food stalls, hair salons, currency exchange, and communication booths, many of which are operated by migrants. Some men work as cart transporters, while women are often involved in cleaning market areas. There are two other sectors that show gender-based division of

labor. Sewing workshops pre-dominantly employ women, while men are often found working in construction. The rental housing market has also grown as a result of migration and urbanization. Many migrants in the Kelechek area, near the Dordoy market, have built separate rental units to accommodate other migrants. In new settlements, another sector of informal employment has emerged, catering to the service needs of the residents. People who own land or houses in these areas, often early migrants who settled in the 1990s, open small shops, bakeries, baths, hair salons, and cafes. Consequently, the main street in Kelechek is primarily occupied by these service-oriented establishments.

The availability of diverse job opportunities is considered a key aspect of urbanization. Unfortunately, obtaining precise figures on migration and population growth in Bishkek is challenging. Official statistics only account for registered individuals, while many migrants remain unregistered. Estimates suggest that the number of migrants residing in Kelechek ranges from 7,000 to 10,000 people, depending on the season (National Statistics Committee, 2022: 301). Thus, determining the exact number of people settling in new settlement areas is impossible.

Tracking the influx of people into the capital has become increasingly challenging due to the fact that, in most cases, migrants are not required to have city residence permits when they find employment in the informal sector or rent accommodations in new settlements. In situations where residence permits are necessary, a well-established system of bribery can circumvent the registration process. Sitnyansky (2006) mentions an estimated number of 300,000 residents in the suburbs of Bishkek, although the data sources supporting this figure remain unclear.

The most relevant information comes from World Bank report, experts highlights the varying population estimates, ranging from 110,966 to

300,000 individuals, obtained from different sources (Sitnyansky, 2006: 263).

The complexity of maintaining accurate statistics is exemplified by the statement of the head of the territorial self-government body (referred to as "ayyl okmot" - rural administration) named Kelechek: Keeping an exact count in our region is virtually impossible... Almost every day, around three people come to our office seeking proof of residence. When we inquire about the reasons, they mention plans to migrate to Russia or elsewhere. However, on the same day, five other individuals may visit us to register their residency... The constant alterations in our records have made it difficult to make sense of the data. Moreover, accounting for tenants is exceedingly challenging since landlords conceal the precise number of occupants in the rooms they rent out (field note dated July 23, 2022).

New settlements in Bishkek in comparative perspective

It is necessary to consider the emic term "novostroyka". In the Kyrgyzstan context, novostroyka refers to new settlements around the capital officially called "zhilye massiv".

The history of novostroyki dates back to the late 1980s and early 1990s when, according to my informants, the first plots of land were seized by workers from various factories and plants that were still functioning at that time. After attempts at mass seizures, as recounted by the oldest residents of Kelechek and Kok-Jar, the city administration began allocating plots of land to those who were in the housing queue in the capital, but this time on legitimate grounds.

In his book "Bishkek – the Capital of Kyrgyzstan," Malabaev J.M. writes that in 1989, after the fact of mass unauthorized seizures of state and collective farm lands in June of the same year, the Executive Committee of the City Council made a decision to allocate 9,759 land plots. Additionally,

in October 1989, this issue was considered by the Council of the Ministry of Construction of the Kyrgyz Republic, which allocated two dozen settlements and 13.4 thousand plots of land for individual construction. The author of the book lists the measures taken by the city administration regarding the development of "zones of individual new construction," the allocation of bus routes, the laying of power lines, the design of schools, clinics, and the development of roads (Malabaev, 2001: 269).

Novostroyki have grown and continue to grow on the sites of former fields, contributing to the extensive growth of the city. In so-called "prestigious" districts, new settlements consist of two-story brick mansions, but the vast majority of novostroyki are made of adobe one-story houses since clay and saman (a mixture of clay and straw) are the most accessible building materials in the region. Brick and clay have become unofficial indicators of material prosperity or poverty.

One distinguishing feature of post-Soviet novostroyki on the outskirts of the capital is the presence of land plots ranging from four to eight hundred square meters, which corresponds to private construction of individual houses. Regardless of whether expensive brick mansions or adobe houses and huts are built, the essence lies in the land plots, the value of which increases. The presence of land plots allows for household farming, which is a sign of ruralization, along with proximity to urban infrastructure.

This same characteristic of owning land plots in settlements that emerged through illegal self-construction is also observed on the outskirts of other cities in post-Soviet Central Asia, such as Almaty, Tashkent, and Ulan-Ude (Alexander, Buchli and Humphrey, 2007: 27). The process of administrative inclusion of novostroyki into urban management and, consequently, the legalization of their connection to urban infrastructure has already been well-established. It should be noted that in English

literature, the term "suburb" is used, literally meaning "outskirts, suburb." However, the use of this term may be somewhat controversial for describing our novostroyki.

David Byrne in his book "Understanding the City" (Byrne, 2001: 113) argues that in the United Kingdom and the United States, the term "suburb" originally referred to areas outside the city walls, but its meaning began to change in the late 18th century as cities grew and people started living at some distance from their workplaces. By the end of the 19th century, the development of railway and tram systems led to the formation of massive suburbs in these countries (the author also provides the example of Australia in the post-war period).

Kyrgyzstan has been undergoing a similar process in the last 15-17 years, with the population of the country migrating to the capital for various reasons (Alexander, Buchli and Humphrey, 2007: 28) and settling, mainly in new settlements. Currently, the trolleybus line has only reached one new development, Ak-Orgo, located in the southwest of the capital.

It is difficult to draw a direct parallel between David Byrne's analysis of the development of urban outskirts and the reality in Kyrgyzstan. Byrne emphasizes the importance of suburbs for urban authorities, as they were primarily inhabited by skilled workers. The authorities paid significant attention to the development of such areas to meet the needs of the workforce. However, in the case of our country, the influx of people to the capital and the expansion of its population and geography are not driven by the growth of factories and plants, as the system of these institutions was destroyed after the collapse of the USSR. The majority of people arriving in the Kyrgyz capital consist of low-skilled or unskilled workers, as will be discussed below. Nevertheless, Byrne mentions areas designated for black workers, such as Detroit, for example. Thus, he speaks of differentiation of suburbs based on privileging their residents.

In the history of Bishkek's new settlements, we can currently observe the process of defining the "prestige" of certain districts, which has intensified in the last year or two. For example, a few years ago, purchasing a land plot in new settlements was not difficult, according to informants. A six-acre plot cost around \$600 in new settlements (essentially fields) and up to \$1,000-\$1,500 in more developed districts. Today, the land plots cost no less than \$10,000, and the price increases depending on the location of the district.

The prestige is determined by clean air ("the closer to the mountains, the cleaner the air"), availability of utilities, and the depth of groundwater. Some of the districts that fall into this category are those closest to the city, south of Moskovskaya Street, such as Chon-Aryk, Ak-Orgo, Arch-Beshik, and Kok-Zhar, which were among the earliest new settlements, have also become classified as prestigious in the last year or two, and their permanent residents no longer agree with the term "new settlements".

Bishkek naturally slopes from south to north, and the districts located below Zhibe-Zholy Street, i.e., the northern districts, are geographically lower. Groundwater is close to the surface in this part, and it is where the main garbage dumps and the city's sewage treatment plant are located. However, these are just a few reasons for the conditional determination of "non-prestige." To understand the larger causes, a separate study is necessary, which is beyond the scope of this work.

Kelichek, according to my informants, is considered a non-prestigious new settlements because it is located in the "red zone" - a square between a former chemical plant, a chemical waste storage facility, a landfill, and a former cemetery. However, it is the largest and until recently the only new settlements that adjoins the "Dordoi" market, and therefore Kelichek attracts thousands of "new" migrants every year who rent rooms here and work at the market.

Another parallel can be drawn in the "anti-urbanist" program of construction and development of suburbs as "garden towns" without high-rise apartment buildings. The difference lies in the fact that, according to the examples from Byrne, urban authorities controlled the process of suburban development and construction. However, in the new settlements of Bishkek, control from the chief architect and the mayor's office can be observed in terms of land allocation and street planning, while everything else (construction, height, complexity, and other aspects of buildings, as well as the supply of electricity, water, roads, and gas) depends on the financial capabilities, and, as it turns out, the coordination or cohesion of the landowners.

The next point of similarity is the construction of public buildings and rental properties. Byrne writes about several stages of such construction by local authorities in the UK between 1918 and 1925, and then again between 1945 and 1956, although he also mentions slums that were demolished in the 1950s. In the new settlements of Bishkek, especially in Kelechek, this type of construction is also popular, with the only difference being that the construction of rental housing is done by individual landowners rather than municipal authorities. Renting out rooms is one of the main sources of income for local (indigenous) residents. For example, in Kelechek, owners of land plots build simple structures consisting of various numbers (from two to ten or more) of small rooms with separate entrances, usually lacking basic amenities (a single water source and a shared toilet in the courtyard).

In the city, these are former dormitories of factories and plants that were privatized by their residents; they are home to a large number of people who have been living there since Soviet times, or migrants renting rooms there. In my first field research conducted in June-July, 2021, my informants mentioned the term "titanic" which they used to refer to such dormitories. Titanic structures in new settlements are the latest adaptive

strategy for internal migrants in Kyrgyzstan, resulting from the socio-economic changes in the context of urbanization (population concentration in cities) of the Kyrgyz population.

History of the formation of new settlements

Kelechek and Køk-Jar are models of settlements that emerged in Kyrgyzstan in recent times. For comparison, most of the northern settlements established in the first half of the Soviet period (referring to the northern part of the country) were founded by settled clans and tribes. Even today, the residents of most of these settlements are the fourth or fifth generation of the original settlers and are to some degree related to each other. The main livelihood of such settlements was livestock farming.

Another type of settlement during the Soviet period was those established for workers of factories and plants, for example, Orlovka in the Kemin district. In these cases, kinship was not the main principle, and apartments and houses were allocated based on orders and not necessarily to relatives or members of the same clan living in close proximity to each other.

New settlements in Bishkek have a relatively short history, dating back to the late 1990s. With the country gaining independence, Kyrgyzstan entered a period of "prolonged transition" accompanied by a flow of internal migration, primarily labor migration, to the capital and its surrounding areas.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the restraining mechanisms for the rural population, mainly consisting of Kyrgyz people, ceased to exist. The requirement for residency permits weakened, and due to the crumbling production system, the salaries of farmers and workers practically disappeared. This led to a significant outflow of the Russian-speaking population, which mainly settled in the Chui region and the capital, leaving the country.

At that time, residents of remote northern districts moved closer to the city to take the place of departing Russians, Germans, Ukrainians and others. As a result, the population of Bystrovka (now the village of Kemin) transformed from a multi-ethnic community to a practically mono-ethnic one. For example, families from mountainous regions like Kochkor relocated to the vacated houses, which appeared more convenient with basic utilities such as electricity and water.

Sitnyansky (1990) also confirms that starting from the early 1990s, there was simultaneous "outflow of 'Russian-speaking' population from the periphery to the Chui region... and an intensive flow of migrants [Kyrgyz people] from the Naryn region (the only mono-ethnic region in Kyrgyzstan)" (Sitnyansky, 2006: 267). This new proximity caused certain dissatisfaction among the "natives" (those who had lived there longer than the newcomers) of Kyrgyz ethnicity. The newcomers were associated with lack of education and backwardness, which characterized the Soviet policy of neglecting rural areas, particularly in terms of education. Later, after agrarian reform, the prosperity of residents in the northern districts, particularly in the Naryn region, began to improve, and the outflow from these areas noticeably weakened.

Another stage of internal migration, which continues to this day, represents the outflow of residents from the southern regions of the country to the northern areas and the capital. The southern regions are more densely populated and characterized by a high level of poverty. Almost all of my informants who arrived in Kelechek from the south cited reasons such as lack of employment, shortage of land, and limited access to water and technical resources, which hindered agricultural work. When people began to realize that the capital was where the money was concentrated and where they could quickly earn a living, the flow of migrants grew exponentially.

The events after March 24, 2005, with mass land seizures, indicate that the flow shows no signs of weakening and that the desire to resettle closer to the capital is not diminishing. For example, in Kelechek, which borders the Dordoy market from the west and consisted of "14th and 15th streets" emerged after the events of March 2005. The vacant land that separated Dordoy and Kelechek was occupied by the land grabbers, mainly the "residents" of Kelechek themselves.

It is important to note that the issue of land seizures is not exclusive to the post-Soviet reality. Even in the Soviet capital, then known as Frunze, the population was growing not only through natural increase but also due to migration, despite the policies of retaining people in rural areas and strict registration. Planned urban construction could not keep up with the growing population's housing needs. In addition to the significant so-called private sector, which itself became denser as houses and plots were divided between two owners, the capital also saw the growth of its own slums.

A part of it has also survived to this day, now called Tököldösh, located along the southern side of Chui Avenue, all the way to Karpinsky Street, which is part of the "golden square," the downtown of the capital. Today, it consists of houses and huts with small courtyards that have been legalized. Its residents, as well as those who already live in other districts, maintain their registration in Tököldösh in the hope that someday the state construction in the capital will resume, and they will be resettled in new apartments, as happened in the last decade of the Soviet era with the majority of Tököldösh, which was replaced by the "Vostok-5" micro-district.

A resident of Kelechek K53, in an interview, described how during her student years she and her friends rented a room in huts made of particle board and cardboard, which were attached to each other, in the area of the modern 6th and 7th micro-

districts. She does not remember who and when started building the huts, but she knows that they were constructed by workers from factories and plants who grew and tired of waiting for their turn to receive housing.

Kelichek can be considered one of the more established settlements today, as its history begins in the late 1990s. This new settlement consists of 15 streets, although until 2005 there were only 14 streets, arranged in a so-called "American" grid pattern. That is, all the streets are located inside a rectangle, parallel to each other and perpendicular to the Dordoy market. One central street, running alongside Kelichek, serves as the main thoroughfare for mini-busses (two routes). Necessary power lines have been installed here, but the houses are not yet provided with water. Since the end of 2005, Kelichek has had its own secondary school and medical center.

Thus, the capital's new settlements can be divided into old and new. The former includes those that were formed in the late 1990s and have already been incorporated into the city's administration, such as Kelichek and Kok-Zhar. The latter have their history starting around the 2000s, for example, the so-called Seleksia, located between the new settlement of Ak-Orgo and Archa-Beshik, or Dordoy-1 and Dordoy-2. There are also newer "hotbeds" of illegal land grabs that emerged after the events of March 2005 around existing new settlements, like the "15th street" of Kelichek.

Challenges and Issues of Ethnicity within Urbanization

What challenges of ethnicity do migrants face when changing their place of residence and work? Field research in Kelichek has identified the following aspects. Practically 100% of internal migrants settling in new settlements are Kyrgyz. Therefore, we are only discussing Kyrgyz identity. One might question whether migrants can actually experience problems when they are moving within their own

country and acquiring new neighbors who are also Kyrgyz.

Ethnicity is understood as the phenomenon of self-identification through comparison with others, through the search for similarities primarily to realize one's uniqueness, and secondly, to define oneself as a member of a group. This underlies the dichotomy of "we-they" (Eriksen, 2002:19), which serves as a unifying force within a group and manifests itself in the interaction between two or more groups. Additionally, the phenomenon of ethnicity serves as a measure of the vast social and cultural diversity of human society. Ethnicity is not static but situational, especially in the constantly changing world.

When migrants arrive in the city, they immerse themselves in a new world with a faster pace of life and numerous new contacts with people from different regions, whom they had only heard about before. According to Bart's theory, non-isolation determines the importance and necessity of differentiation (in this case, division), as well as the presence of multiple new contacts. It is precisely the encounter with new people and the need to establish relationships with them (work-related, neighborhood-related) that evokes the desire for self-identification.

The more intense life in the city, which migrants have to establish, constantly creates various conditions that intensify the various aspects (referred to as components in this context) of ethnicity: social, kinship-based, regional, gender-based, and religious. The scope of this article does not allow for a detailed discussion of each aspect, so observations and conclusions based on field materials will only be briefly presented for some of them.

Social Composition

Who are the residents of new settlements? Are they former rural residents engaged in livestock farming and the agricultural sector, or residents of small towns in the country who previously worked

in industries that ceased to exist after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and decided to try their hand at both livestock farming and agriculture but did not find significant benefits and chose to move to the capital?

One characteristic of rural life is the lack of monetary funds, and families primarily subsist on their own agricultural produce. A distinguishing feature of the city is the use of cash, as the urban setting operates within a monetary system. Migrants in the city contribute to the army of low- or unskilled labor in the informal sector. It is in the city, specifically the capital in our case, where the main financial resources are concentrated, and people believe that they can always earn cash in the city. Money and access to it are the primary motivators and resources for overcoming difficulties, providing a sense of stability and greater confidence in tomorrow. Thus, when asked about the difference between the village and the city, my informants mentioned access to money and the opportunities to earn it:

"In the village, there is no money, but here [in the city - A.A.] you can always earn money at the market, or worst case scenario, you can sweep the market streets and earn 2200 soms (\$25)" (Field note from July 17, 2022). Fieldwork in Kelechek revealed several dichotomies that its residents employ to adapt to new conditions and numerous new contacts. The residents of Kelechek differentiate themselves based on the principles of "old and new residents" as well as "homeowners" and "tenants." The time of arrival in Kelechek, ownership of land and houses, and possession of documents relating to property and residency are the determining factors for each of these statuses. Both "old" and "new" residents can be homeowners, meaning they rent out housing. These statuses contribute to a sense of self-sufficiency as legitimate residents of new settlements. This feeling is explained by the association of Kelechek as their own home, which is tied to future plans. "Old

residents" may still possess a somewhat superior position in relation to others and unite through shared memories of Kelechek's history and formation.

"The occupants" have a marginal status because Kelechek is not their final destination, but only a temporary place of residence. Therefore, there are no plans for the future associated with it, and migrant occupants do not feel the need to make efforts to improve living conditions and establish contacts. The "old" and "new" residents, essentially being neighbors and having a horizontal axis of relationships, tend to interact for a long time, although the nature of their interaction can also be influenced by economic circumstances. On the other hand, the relationship between the "hosts" and the "occupants" is on a vertical axis of hierarchy, so it is reduced to fulfilling the conditions of renting a room.

It is important to emphasize that almost all residents of new settlements go through a stage of marginality. This applies to those who became residents through self-seizure and those who bought land plots on municipal land that has not yet been legalized.

Clan and kinship, regional, and religious components

The primary mechanism of internal migration is the so-called horizontal network of relationships based on kinship ties. I assume that in the beginning, "migration" had a certain kinship character, where land could be allocated based on kinship and local connections, which in a certain context means "distant relative." Alternatively, the choice of a resettlement location may have been influenced by the presence of a brother, uncle, or relative who had already "settled" and had acquaintances among those who distribute land, thus helping their relatives obtain desired plots in their area or even on their street. Kinship relations also play a

major role in labor seasonal migration, and such migrants are potential residents of new settlements.

Now, with the internal migrant flow having increased several times compared to the early 1990s (Sitnyansky, 2006: 271), plot selection is based on different principles: where communication systems and infrastructure are more developed, or closer to the place of work, or cheaper, as "priority" housing projects have already been identified. Now, with the constantly increasing value of land due to the capital's growing population density, identification based on the place of origin, i.e., regional identity, becomes more relevant than mere kinship affiliation.

In addition, in the context of numerous new contacts, differentiating oneself from others based on region or place of origin becomes the simplest and most accessible mechanism, overshadowing gender identity. Practically all of my informants, in one way or another, touched upon the belonging to the place where they were born and where the opponent came from. In the discourse under consideration, the concept of religiosity plays a significant role. For both sides, self-identification and differentiation from each other, the degree of commitment to religion is considered an important factor. For my informants, religiosity primarily means the formal fulfillment of the requirements and dogmas of religion, and in rare cases, how much the person believes in what they do. For representatives of both sides, being a "bad or good Muslim" was one of the determining factors of "national purity".

An important factor in determining religiosity is also the relationship with literacy. The Soviet legacy has left a fairly persistent understanding of religiosity as a sign of illiteracy, thereby categorizing both phenomena as negative and referred to as "vestiges of the past." Based on my observations and interviews, it is still the case for the majority of people that the fervent adherence to Islamic dogma is seen as a result of low education. All disputes are

based on and expressed primarily through the use of stereotypes. Kelechek is an illustration of the functioning and "endurance" of ethnic stereotypes in the interaction between mono-ethnic but different regional groups. Stereotypes allow people to judge others with ready-made ideas that are perceived in society, without making efforts to discover the true reasons for cultural or personal differences. During my initial field research in Kelechek, it was evident how people, who had only heard about each other before, now, living together, build their relationships based on preconceived judgments acquired in childhood.

Conclusion

Kyrgyzstan is experiencing the predictable process of urbanization, with a concentration of population in and around its capital as a result of internal migration from rural areas. Bishkek is seen as a post-Soviet model of the global urbanization process. The concentration of rural population in cities is a characteristic feature of post-colonial reality, and self-seizures and self-construction are common traits in all third-world countries, including Kyrgyzstan.

However, the distinctive feature of post-Soviet Central Asian urbanization, unlike other countries with rapidly growing slums, is the growth of new settlements on the outskirts of cities, where each person becomes the owner of a certain land plot, which is not the case in slums. These settlements have distinct areas and streets with wealthy mansions demonstrating affluence, as well as poor adobe houses and huts. In Kyrgyzstan, these suburban areas are commonly referred to as "novostroyki" by the locals, or officially known as new settlements. It is possible to distinguish between old, new, and newest "novostroyki," which indicates rapid growth in accordance with economic, political, and social events in the country and the region. Some of these new settlements are already incorporated into the city's structure, some are still

under the jurisdiction of neighboring administrations, and the remaining ones are just beginning the process of legalization.

Migration has created an informal labor sector (ILS) in which almost all residents of new settlements are employed. It is important to emphasize the interdependence of the processes under consideration. The city attracts rural residents with hopes of employment and access to money. The flow of migrants settles in expanding new settlements and replenishes the army of the ILS. The diversity of activities offered by the ILS allows those who have already arrived and settled to invite their relatives to the city to seek employment. The main conditions determined by urbanization, monetary relationships, and multiple contacts create challenges for the ethnic identities of migrant residents in new settlements. The variety of new statuses, along with the active reinforcement of stereotypes, contributes to adaptation to the new conditions. Residents of earlier, so-called "old" settlements demonstrate a sense of collectivity, identifying themselves as residents of a specific area and sharing a common concern for its development. Thus, the country is experiencing an era of rural-to-urban migration. As a result, there is a blending of clan and regional identities, forming a new civic identity as city and country residents.

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